

ANXB
F
1376
.L72
1886

HERE AND THERE
In
YUCATAN



PLANTATION, 1886

Lane & Son



Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2017 with funding from
Getty Research Institute

HERE AND THERE
IN
YUCATAN.

MISCELLANIES

BY
ALICE D. LE PLONGEON,
AUTHOR OF
YUCATAN—ITS ANCIENT PALACES AND MODERN CITIES.

J. W. BOUTON,
706 BROADWAY, NEW YORK.
1886.

Entered according to an Act of Congress, October 1st, 1886, by

ALICE D. LE PLONGEON,

In the office of the Librarian of Congress at Washington.

All rights reserved.

THE PUBLISHERS
BOOK COMPOSITION AND ELECTROTYPING CO.
157 AND 159 WILLIAM STREET
NEW YORK

PREFACE.

DURING a sojourn of several years in Yucatan, traveling here and there, stopping where we found interesting vestiges of the Mayas, the highly-civilized ancient inhabitants of that country, we had every opportunity of mingling with the natives. Thus we became acquainted with their mode of life, religion, sacred rites, superstitions, fables and traditions; as well as learning something of their philosophy, and observing how communism is practiced among them. In a ranch called X-Uaiul, near the ruined city of Zay, the inhabitants still preserve the customs of their ancestors. Not only do they work their fields in common, and share equally the product of their labor, but even the food is cooked for all in one building, every family sending thither for its allowance, which is regulated according to the number of persons in each home. They even intermarry—no one dreaming of seeking a husband or a wife outside of their community.

PREFACE.

At different times I have published, in papers and magazines, various articles on these subjects, some being reproduced in English periodicals. It is in compliance with the request of friends that a few of those articles have been brought together in this little volume, which is now cast adrift to sink or swim, as its fate may be.

CONTENTS.

ALONG THE COAST,	-	-	-	-	I
AMONG THE TURTLE CATCHERS,	-	-	-	-	19
GEMS BURIED IN THE SAND,	-	-	-	-	23
BEAUTIFUL COZUMEL,	-	-	-	-	28
THE EVIL EYE,	-	-	-	-	45
PYGMIES, REAL AND FICTITIOUS,	-	-	-	-	53
TRAVELING WITH TURTLES,	-	-	-	-	62
THE CARIBS,	-	-	-	-	70
REMARKABLE WELLS AND CAVERNS,	-	-	-	-	76
IDOLATRY IN YUCATAN,	-	-	-	-	83
NEW YEAR'S DAY AMONG THE MAYAS,	-	-	-	-	93
BONDAGE IN COMMUNISM,	-	-	-	-	98
THE LOST LITERATURE OF THE MAYAS,	-	-	-	-	106
FABLES TOLD BY THE MAYAS INDIANS,	-	-	-	-	121
MAYA ROMANCE,	-	-	-	-	127
PHILOSOPHY OF AN INDIAN SAGE,	-	-	-	-	131
SUPERSTITION CONCERNING ECLIPSES,	-	-	-	-	137
EVOCATION OF SPIRITS,	-	-	-	-	140

ALONG THE COAST.

THE *Vivi* was a sloop of twenty tons burden, bound for Islands Mugerres and Cozumel, places we had long desired to visit ; we therefore decided to take this opportunity. The sloop was anchored before Progreso (port of Yucatan), and would start that night. At dusk we descended the slippery steps of the wooden pier, and when a big wave brought the skiff near our feet, jumped into it and were rowed to the *Vivi*, that looked very diminutive rocking on the dark billows, for the sea was decidedly rough. The captain helped us to scramble on deck, and we set sail immediately.

I have a dim recollection of taking possession of the cabin, which was about eight feet square, with a bench at the further end, and a berth on each side, and remember ardently wishing that all the globe was terra-firma, or that I had never been born, as well as indulging in a great many other unphilosophical thoughts that seasickness will induce, particularly when cockroaches two inches long are wandering over the victim. That was June 20, and

the following are the eloquent and remarkably interesting memoranda of the next four days :

21. At dusk anchored a short distance from land at a place called Telchac. How stupid I was to come in this miserable boat !

22. Stopped at Sacrisan, and again at Hacun. Don't know why.

23. Stopped at Cilan. Wish the water would stop. Head wind. Heavy thunder storm. Very rough. Extra sick. Wish I was dead !

24. Stopped at Holbox. Feel a little better. Ate a cracker. Fine weather.

To those who have been seasick I need offer no apology for such a diary ; they will fully understand that I am not responsible.

Holbox is a picturesque Indian village whose inhabitants make a living by catching turtle to send to British Honduras, where the demand is constant. Near the shore there were turtles in pens. For a moment we feared that some of those creatures, weighing 500 pounds each, might be added to our freight ; and to see them on the deck, on their backs, their flaps sewn together, and gasping for breath, is enough—almost—to make one jump overboard. The huts of the fishermen are a long distance from the shore, and the indolent natives positively refused to bring water to the sloop, though we had stopped expressly for that, being much in need.

Charming as the village looks at a distance, it has

one great drawback, being infested with the terrible Uolpoch (the wickedly minded), a snake thus named by the Indians because without any provocation whatever it attacks, drawing itself up after the manner of a cheese-maggot, and darting at its victim a few feet distant. The venom of this viper causes the blood to ooze through every pore of the skin, and death always ensues in a very short time. No antidote for the poison is known, and the natives greatly dread this snake, because, owing to its color, it can easily be mistaken for a piece of dry wood when it lies straight on the ground. It is two feet long, about an inch and a half in diameter throughout its length, the tail terminating as if cut obliquely, and the mouth shaped like the beak of a quail.

We next cast anchor at Island Contoy to avoid a long line of reefs that are difficult to see in the darkness of night. Island Contoy is four miles long, very picturesque, and totally uninhabited except by millions of sea birds. At dusk immense flocks came home and hovered over the *Vivi*, as if to examine the great object that had approached their domains.

After dark the island is a dreadful place in the estimation of the simple-minded folk who frequent those waters, because a great treasure said to be buried there is supposed to be guarded by a phan-

tom. One old man who pretended to know the whereabouts of the treasure is said to have been frightened from the place by the apparition of a gigantic negro, accompanied by a fierce hound. Three men once made a bet to pass the night on the island, and actually went there; but it is believed that they were pursued and terrified to death by the spectral keeper of the hidden gold, for daylight revealed one prostrate corpse on the beach, another in the water, and the third man was a raving maniac who never recovered reason.

Several years ago it was generally thought that pirates had buried various treasures there, but in what particular places no one knew. At certain times of the year fishermen from the mainland went to the island to fish, building huts to serve them for the season. One day when a few of these men were on the beach, a large American vessel appeared on the horizon. In due time it cast anchor before Contoy. Several men landed, and producing papers and maps, said that they had come for certain money buried there.

Strange to say, their map led them to the very spot where the fishermen had built their hut: the thatched roof was right over the treasure! The occupants were told that if they would dig they

should be handsomely rewarded; so they went to work and soon unearthed some large boxes filled with gold coin, which were promptly put on board. Then the ship sailed away with its precious freight, after the fishermen had been paid a hundred dollars each for their labor of an hour. This account was given us by one of those very fishermen, now quite aged.

On the tenth day after leaving Progreso, about nine o'clock at night, we sailed into the beautiful Bay of Dolores, at Mugeris Island, or Women's Island, as the Spanish conquerors called it, because they found in the temples of the natives many images of women. The water of the bay was as unruffled and crystaline as a sheet of emerald; and the village of Dolores made a charming picture, with its thatched cottages, boats hauled up on the white beach, and tall palms waving like feathered canopies above the dwellings; while the perfect stillness made us almost imagine that we beheld an enchanted island awaiting the touch of a magic wand. That wand was the first golden sun-ray that shot from the east, calling every creature to life and action. Doors were thrown open; faint columns of smoke wreathed their way to the cloudless sky; children ran to the beach to float their toy ships; fishermen

launched their boats; women passed to and fro, and feathered songsters warbled their sweetest lay. No wonder that the last pirate chief, Captain Lafitte, made this island his headquarters. Some old people there well remember him as "a nice gentleman who paid for everything he had from the fishermen along the coast, and never harmed any poor person."

It was at the beginning of the present century that Lafitte became a terror to the ships that navigated the Gulf of Mexico and Caribbean Sea, among the West India Islands down to the coast of Venezuela. In the beautiful harbor of Mugeris Island he found perfect shelter from the storms that at certain times of the year sweep with violence along those coasts; and on the top of some dunes south of what is now the village of Dolores he built small towers, whence he could keep an eye on the surrounding waters. The foundations of these towers yet remain in place, and "every Christmas Eve the ghost of a sailor wanders about the hills." No one dares speak to him, believing that it would cause them to die within one year.

When not on board, Lafitte's men lived in huts on the very spot where the village now is. Lafitte is described as having been very haughty with his men, punishing the least breach of discipline, and

never allowing them to approach him without first asking permission, although he was kind to the poor people on the coast. Once, when the Alcalde of a village refused to sell him meat for his men, he caused them to seize a bull and put it on his ship. On being told by the fishermen that that bull had been brought for their amusement in a festival, he had it at once restored to them, stating that he would be sorry to deprive them of the little pleasure they had in their life of toil and hardship. After the bull-fight, plenty of meat was sent to him as a present; then he insisted on paying for it, saying that he would take nothing from the poor.

The tragic fate of this pirate king is told and retold by those who recollect the event. Just at a time when some of Lafitte's ships were away from the place of rendezvous, a strong force was sent against him. He encountered it near Contoy and fought bravely, but his ship struck a rock and sunk. He took to the boats with eight or ten men, and succeeded in landing on a sandbank called Blanquilla, but was pursued and surrounded. One by one all his men fell; still he refused to surrender, and was killed there, defending himself as long as there was breath in his body.

The bay is generally animated, because many fish-

ing smacks from Cuba frequent those waters, and the captains make the bay their headquarters, as the pirates did at the beginning of this century. These smacks are generally handsome schooners, of thirty to seventy tons burden, divided in three compartments. The central one forms a large tank whose sides are perforated with hundreds of holes, through which the sea water passes freely in and out. As soon as caught the fishes are bled by piercing them behind the right fin with a thin, hollow, cylindrical tube, then thrown in the tank, to be transferred to other large cages, also perforated, that are anchored near shore; these are closed with a padlock. When enough fish are caught to almost fill the vessel's tank, they are taken to Havana to be kept in other tanks till required for the market.

In case of stormy weather or laziness, the captains remain at Mugeris Island for days together, never in a hurry to leave; for if in Spain they have one family, here also there are blue-eyed children to climb on their knees and call them "Papa." This state of affairs does not seem to be out of the way there; it may be that few have preserved the right to point the finger at their neighbor.

Besides the schooners from Havana, there are coasting sloops that carry on considerable contra-

band between British Honduras and Yucatan, stopping at the island for any cargo they can get.

As for the islanders' boats, they constantly come and go; some are exceedingly small. The fishermen handle them most skillfully, one alone easily manages rudder and sail; they frequently stand upright in the smallest craft, apparently as much at ease as on land. To balance large boats they tie to the mast a rope with a long loop at the other end. In this a man sits as in a swing, his feet resting on the edge of the weather-side of the boat that is thus kept straight in a very strong wind, the man swinging himself backward over the water.

The east side of the island presents a complete and beautiful contrast to the west. Rocks and crags run from one end to the other, the never-tiring waves ceaselessly dashing against them. What scope for the wildest fancy on this rocky shore!—with its millions of periwinkles and other shell fish. A lilliputian world—miniature caverns, shells of every shape and color, tiny tunnels, rivers and lakes, filled with sparkling bubbles of foam—and the sea eternally roaring.

We found a strange character living on the island apart from every one except two men who serve him. With them he makes houses, stone walls, and

statues of himself. He calls himself Spanish Consul and *fomentador*, has large plantations of vegetables, and plenty of cattle, yet will neither give nor sell anything to anybody, not even a little milk for any one who is sick. Vegetables and fruits ripen and rot, while his cattle roam everywhere and spoil all that other people plant. He works like a slave, and only allows himself one scanty meal a day. No one knows why he lives such an austere, isolated, selfish existence. It is understood that in his younger days he was engaged in the slave-trade on the African coast, and the people believe he must have committed some heinous crime that keeps him a prey to remorse, which he tries to stifle by doing penance. Some say he is haunted, and others that he is looking for the treasure, because he frequently changes his place of residence, building a new hut each time. He has plenty of gold ounces, yet seldom approaches the village. When he passes along the beach at twilight the friendly chat is suddenly hushed, and some one exclaims, in an awe-struck whisper: "There goes Mondaca!"

After some delay we obtained a canoe to take us to the eastern coast of Yucatan, only six miles distant. Our object was to examine some ancient structures at a place called Meco, where pilgrims

used to worship every year when on their way to Muges and Cozumel, whither they went as Mahometans journey to Mecca.

After the bush was cut down we succeeded in measuring a temple: it was ten feet in height, built on the summit of an artificial mound forty feet high, with stone steps on the east side. In the base of the mound there were very small rooms, in which we were just able to stand upright.

Surrounding the courtyard where the temple was there were other apartments of the same size, that may have served as lodgings for pilgrims; only people under three feet high could be comfortable in them. As we stooped to crawl in and out, we conjured up visions of diminutive individuals going back and forth, and up and down the almost perpendicular stairs, in quaint and scanty attire, bearing offerings to propitiate the dear gods of the sea. All the other buildings at Mecu were equally small; and the natives affirm, as a matter of course, that they were built and inhabited by dwarfs.

There is another of these strange cities further down the coast, called Nizucte; and though exposed to a visit from hostile Indians, we found there three men, one accompanied by his wife and a pretty daughter of eighteen summers. They were from

the village of Dolores, and having put up a thatched roof intended to remain at Nizucte a few days, working hard at scraping a woolly substance from the trunk of a fan-palm called in Spanish *guano*. We asked how much they could earn at that work, and were informed that one *aroba* (twenty-five pounds) is worth \$2.50; three people working together obtain that amount in two days. The stuff is used to make cushions and pillows, being as soft as feathers, but firmer. The leaf of the *guano* is baked underground, and made into very strong ropes that serve the fishermen in their boats; the canoe we had engaged had no other rope in it. The fresh leaves make excellent fans, that retain a bright-green color for eight or ten days. They were put into our hands to keep off mosquitos when we were invited to be seated on a log under the thatched roof. The pretty girl offered us cigarettes; she was astonished when we declined. Not smoke! It was such a consolation! Would we not try just a very little one? She seemed to regard me as an object of pity because I had never used tobacco, and my husband as a very peculiar being for having given up the use of the weed.

These people informed us that the "queer old houses" were close by. The largest building proved

to be a diminutive temple, at the entrance of which were two enormous snake heads made of concrete; they were embraced and encircled by gnarled roots that looked like dark-skinned serpents entwining the mineral representations of the same reptiles. Near by we found two large human legs, also concrete, and a square pedestal one foot high, on which was a symbol of the Phallic worship, two lobsters and a small turtle, all made of concrete. The doorway of the temple was three feet high and one and a half wide. The structure consisted of large, well-hewn stones, and the ceiling formed a triangular arch with capping stones, though outside the building was square.

It did not take long to see all the ruins, but the owner of our canoe said he could not return to the village till next day, or perhaps the day following, as he desired to load his boat with lime and wood; we had therefore to make the best of it.

After dark we sat round an enormous camp fire, and knowing that it was not impossible for us to be disturbed by wild beasts or Indians, we vied with each other in telling blood-curdling stories to make the time pass pleasantly. Near the fire there were two trees of poison-oak at a convenient distance from each other to hang a hammock from them, so

there we decided to sleep, but the mosquitoes were determined that we should not; there were millions of these fiendish insects, and no amount of smoke seemed to annoy them. A refreshing shower sprinkled us now and again, which relieved us from our tormentors for a few minutes.

On our way back to Island Mugerres we passed through immense schools of sardines, and that evening enjoyed some of them for dinner. They were very large and of a remarkably fine flavor, but the people in those parts only catch a few now and then to serve as bait for bigger fish.

Our next expedition was to the salt pits in the middle of the island. By an underground passage these large pools communicate with the sea on the east side. At the beginning of the fishing season, men and women go to collect the salt that is deposited by evaporation on the shore of the pools. They seem to regard it as a kind of picnic, though the work is laborious, especially for the women, who stand up to their waists in muddy water all day long, putting the salt into large turtle shells that serve instead of vats. It would be almost impossible to transport the salt by land to village Dolores; the only roads are narrow pathways through the thicket, and the soil is so rocky and

uneven that it is tiresome to walk, much more so to carry a load. A great extent of the interior of the island is taken up by a most picturesque lake that opens on the south side of the bay by a narrow channel through which the water of the ocean enters. The lake is consequently subject to tides, and it is navigable for the majority of the canoes used by the fishermen.

The channel is crooked and scarcely more than nine feet wide, having dense thickets of mangroves on each side. It takes about half an hour to go through it, then the lake suddenly opens to our view, truly a charming scene! It is surrounded by banks twenty feet high, covered with verdure; sea-gulls soar overhead, filling the air with discordant screams, while pelicans, herons and storks, are perched here and there, half hidden among the foliage, motionless, wistfully watching the water, to catch the unsuspecting fish that venture within their reach.

The lake is nearly three miles long; its southern end reaches to within a hundred yards of the salt pit; thus the labor of transporting the salt is made comparatively easy.

During our stay at the village Dolores, we examined a curious old manuscript, written in very

quaint Spanish, that is called the "*Book of the Jew*." It is held in great esteem by the people there as well as by many of the inhabitants on the mainland, and so highly appreciated that those who possess copies, either in print or manuscript, can hardly be induced to let them go out of their hands. For the benefit of the reader we give a few extracts from the volume:

"For the bite of vipers take two inches from the middle of the snake's body, burn it; then put the ashes on the wound. It will be cured."

Heart disease and epilepsy are trifling matters for the "Jew;" his unfailing remedy is—"Three swallows' hearts tied to the patient's left arm."

Here is advice "for the faint-hearted." "Wear a small bag, containing Artemesia, over the heart; it will give thee vigor and daring." "A spider rolled in its web and worn around the neck will cure ague and fever."

"To prevent hydrophobia let a woman swallow the tongue of a male iguano, and a man that of a female iguano."

For some diseases the patient is advised to cook a turkey buzzard, feathers and all, and drink the broth. Ground bones of the skunk are likewise much recommended.

"Cook the head of a rattlesnake in a new vessel containing a pint of vinegar, then take from the head the little thorn-like fangs. One of these applied to an aching tooth, will make it fall out without any pain; but take care not to touch any other tooth, for as many as you touch will fall out."

Those who have a poor memory are advised to use mustard as snuff: "a very little of it and you will understand more in one hour than those who do not know the secret will in a day."

"Every human body consists of four humors: phlegm, blood, anger, and melancholy, to which correspond four elements: heat, cold, moisture, and dryness."

And this book was published several years ago as a learned work on medicine!

At the south end of the island, on a narrow promontory, there is an ancient shrine, built of well-hewn stone, abandoned since the time of the conquest. To it, in ages gone by, pilgrims repaired from far and near to deposit offerings on the altar. These chiefly consisted of clay figures representing the human body or parts of it; fragments of them are found in the sand all around. We were fortunate enough to unearth a very perfect face, that of a woman, and a pair of feet with sandals.

The shrine stands on a platform 2 metres high, and is itself 3 metres in height (9 feet, 9 inches) with a frontage of 6 metres. The doorway faces south, and the walls are nearly three feet thick. The interior was divided in two rooms, the altar being in the smallest.

The lintels of the doorways are sapote wood. On them various names have been carved at different times. Among others we saw that of Mr. Goodall, with the date 1841. This gentleman is now President of the American Bank Note Company in New York City.

In the floor of the largest room there was a big hole that was made by some one searching for a certain treasure. The rocky elevation upon which the shrine stands is a wild and romantic spot, its base surrounded by crags against which the roaring billows constantly dash their white foam. On each side the rocks are yielding to the unceasing action of the waves ; already part of the platform, and the east wall of the shrine, has been carried down into the sea. Atom by atom, the entire structure will thus disappear in the course of time.

AMONG THE TURTLE CATCHERS.*

THE air was exquisitely soft and balmy, the moon so brilliant that every fleeting cloud was reflected in the clear water of Dolores Bay, while the white sand of the shore glittered under our feet as we sauntered along enjoying the beauty of the scene. In this peaceful bay, six miles from the eastern coast of Yucatan, the Spanish ships anchored nearly four hundred years ago. The principal industry of the villagers is fishing, and from the month of April to August, all their attention is given to turtle-catching. So, on that moon-lit night, as we strolled along the beach, men, women, and children also wended their way to the north end of the island, where all was silent as the white tombstones in the village grave-yard by which we passed. A few hastened their steps as if they feared a departed friend might stalk forth in wind-ing-sheet.

Reaching a place where thick shrubs grew, not far from the water's edge, all concealed themselves

* Published in "Harpers' Bazar."

behind the bushes or in the shadow cast by them, and from their hiding-place watched silently for the turtles. These prolific creatures come to lay their eggs in the sand, never failing to select a spot above high-water mark; consequently at low tide they have to go a good way up on the beach.

Having chosen a place, they quickly make a hole, and deposit therein about one hundred eggs, over which they again put the sand, leaving the spot in appearance as they found it; so that no one would discover the nest but for their tracks. The turtle immediately returns to the water, leaving the eggs to be hatched by the heat of the sun; in due time the little ones make their way out and go straight to the sea.

When the turtle begins to cover the eggs the people creep from their hiding-place and cut off her way to the water; then, when she starts toward them, they capture her and turn her over, not without trouble, for some weigh as much as five hundred pounds. The flaps are tied, and a mark set on the shell, so that when morning comes each party may know which they have captured. The family that catches two or three in a night is well satisfied.

The turtles have formidable jaws, and it is necessary to keep one's hands well out of their reach, for

they can break a man's limb as we can a match. As for conchs—most abundant in those waters—though the shell is hard to break with a hammer, the cahuamo easily cracks it, to eat the delicious contents.

The cahuamo, or hawk-bill, is the largest kind of turtle, weighing from 200 to 500 pounds. Its flesh tastes like good beef, but is generally left on the beach to rot and be consumed by buzzards, the people not being numerous enough to eat it all, though large quantities are dried and salted to be sold as jerked beef. Speculators once went to considerable expense to try and preserve this meat, but we are told it turned bad in the cans.

The catchers gather the eggs, the fat, and shell, though the last is worth so little that they do not always take the trouble to lift it from the beach; many are scattered over the sand. The eggs are considered a great delicacy, and taste very rich, but have a strange sandiness that is unpleasant to the palate.

The carey (*Chelonia imbricata*) is smaller and of more value. The least the islanders will take for the shell is two and a half to three dollars a pound; rather than accept less they will keep it in their house from one year to another. The carey, as well

as the green turtle, is caught with harpoons and nets. The green turtle is carried to British Honduras, where they are worth from one and a half to three dollars each, the shell not being used. The poor creatures are transported in small sailing vessels, where they lie on their backs on deck exposed to the scorching sun, and once a day have buckets of water dashed over them to keep them alive.

Large pens are built at the water's edge to keep the turtles in until shipped for the market. When they become lean, from being kept thus too long, in order that they may fatten again, they are set free in the lake that is in the interior of the island—after being branded with the mark of the owner. They never multiply there, nor make their way through the channel out to the ocean, but owing to the good aliment that they find, are soon again in fine condition for the market.

GEMS BURIED IN THE SAND.*

CONNECTED with almost all the small islands in the neighborhood of the Mexican Gulf and the Caribbean Sea there is some "treasure story," but perhaps none so well authenticated as that of Mugeris Island. This lovely little isle is in latitude north $21^{\circ} 18'$, and longitude west $86^{\circ} 42'$, Greenwich meridian, and about a hundred and twenty miles from British Honduras.

Pirates' exploits and their buried piles of gold and gems are the inexhaustible source of all the romantic stories that the fishermen love to tell on moonlight nights, seated on the bottom of some boat turned up on the beach. They suspect that others dream of treasures as much as they do, for strangers are closely watched. Whichever way we strolled, some one kept us in view. When we mentioned this to Don Pedro Pobedano, one of the oldest inhabitants, he said, "They think you have come for the treasure, which they would never allow to be taken by a stranger." So we invited Don

* Published in "Harpers' Bazar."

Pedro to tell us about it, and he gave us the story as follows :

“ Nearly all of us are from Yalahau, on the opposite coast (Yucatan), but we always came here to fish. I was a little shaver when my uncle first brought me, yet I remember everything. One morning a schooner hove in sight; it soon cast anchor in this bay. There were armed men on board. They came ashore, but seemed not to notice us; we watched and saw them look all around. One evening when we returned to our camp we missed some *tortillas* (Mexican bread), and could not find out who had taken them. Next day the same thing happened, and so the next; then a boy was set to watch. He hid himself, saw an old man steal from the bush, snatch some bread, and quickly retreat.

“ My uncle resolved to capture the thief. Next day we started in our boats, as usual, but soon anchored in a small cove near by, and walked to the camp, where we hid ourselves. We let the old man enter the hut; then we surrounded him, and learned that he had come on board the schooner to show the others where a treasure was, he having seen it buried. Overhearing a conversation in which it was agreed to kill him when the treasure was un-

earthed, so that he might not demand his share, he ran away and hid in the woods, watching for our absence, to procure food. He seemed greatly afraid of the companions he had left; so my uncle told him he was welcome to share with us, but had better keep out of sight till the schooner was gone. Very soon the treasure-seekers went off in their ship, no richer than they came, probably believing the old man dead; but he was hale and hearty, with all his wits about him, though seventy years of age. Concerning himself, he said: 'When quite young I was kidnapped and taken on board a pirate ship, where I was made cabin-boy. One day the crew entered a city on the coast and sacked it, taking lots of gold coin, precious things from the churches, and the bishop's jewels. What a glittering pile it was! They put it all in boxes covered with lead, and brought them here, landing them on the north end of this island, where they dug a trench in the sand sixty steps from the water's edge. In the trench they laid the treasure, and covered it with a piece of tarpaulin and a light coating of sand. Then the captain asked for volunteers to guard it.

"Two negroes stepped forward, and were instantly shot by the captain, who ordered their bodies to be

thrown on the boxes, saying that they would take better care of them dead than alive, because any one finding bones would look no further. The trench was then refilled, and on it three stones were placed to form a triangle, a crowbar being buried ten steps from them. Our ship was soon afterwards captured, and every one on board put to death except me, because I was young and had been kidnapped.'

"After much persuasion," continued Don Pedro, "he *pretended* to look for the treasure, but I think he feared to indicate the spot lest we should kill him, as the others had proposed to do, though we would not have hurt the old man. We took him to our village, and he went to Campeche, where he died. Nothing was heard about the treasure for several years, during which time we formed this village, when one day men arrived from Campeche, bringing a government permit to dig for it. All the trenches back of the old church were made by their order. They did not look at the north point of the island, but they were so sure of finding the money that they paid the people here who worked for them double their usual wages, and spent many dollars, going away so much poorer, for they found nothing. They had lost a map, they said, that indicated the existence of a high stone

having the form of a *cachucha*, and the boxes were buried in front of that. (*Cachucha* is a flat cap, also a small boat.) Another party came to search on the south side of the village, with no better success, and the last comers looked in vain at the north point. In 1847, when the first settlers came, a youth, looking for fire-wood, let fall his *machete* (long knife), and it struck something sounding like metal, which proved to be a crowbar. The youth took it away without marking the spot, for he had heard nothing about the treasure; and yet he was within ten steps of it. It can only be found by the one it is intended for. Once I thought I had it. Digging to make the foundation of a house, we came upon human bones; then I had an immense trench opened, but found nothing more."

We thanked Don Pedro for the story, and decided not to look for the bishop's jewels, though we had no difficulty in finding the stone like a *cachucha* at the north point of the island, and, sixty steps from it, the three stones forming a triangle. In fact an old negro in the city of Tizimin had given us the proper directions, but we never had a chance to dig; there were too many eyes watching us, and it might have cost us our life.

BEAUTIFUL COZUMEL.*

TEN miles from the eastern coast of Yucatan lies the Island of Cozumel, one of Nature's favored spots, where there is perpetual spring, and to live in the open air is a delight. We wanted a house, nevertheless, and were by no means charmed when informed that it would be very difficult to find a lodging.

The centre of the village of St. Miguel is an immense grass-grown square, bounded on the west by the sea, on the east by a thatched church, and on north and south by thatched dwellings. The rest of the village is scattered along the beach and a little way back, not far, for there are only five hundred inhabitants.

Having no tent to pitch, we emphatically insisted on a house, and were at last allowed to take possession of a one-room residence at the southeast corner of the square. It was gloomy, damp, dirty; the floor thickly strewn with dry cocoa-nuts. It had two doors but no window. In

* Published in "New York Tribune."

one corner there was a pile of cocoanuts, to which we immediately began adding others. We were throwing one after another as fast as possible when the old priest of the village introduced himself and said he was glad to find out what the noise was, as he had feared it might be an earthquake coming on; though they had never had one in Cozumel. Father Rejon was in shirt sleeves, for, said he, "I cannot afford to wear a coat every day." He invited us to go and play cards with him in the evening; and also gave us the welcome intelligence that our house was haunted.

We were still throwing the nuts when an Indian girl came running across the square to invite us to dine with her mistress. We therefore locked our doors and went to the house of Dona Concha. In her sitting-room we found Captain Low—in whose schooner *Arjetis* we had arrived—and several unfortunate hens tied in pairs by the feet, struggling on the floor. The poultry of Cozumel are of superior size and quality, and when taken to Key West always fetch a good price. Captain Low wanted five dozen that had to be collected from all over the village. He paid 36 cents for each, though for the same birds the villagers only charged each other 25 cents. The captain also wanted a load

of fruit; but that he could not have, because Dona Concha said only a week or two before a tornado had swept over the island uprooting every fruit tree.

These periodical tornadoes are the only drawback to life in Cozumel. Perhaps that is one of the reasons why it is almost uninhabited. Nevertheless when the Spanish Conquerors arrived there, more than 350 years ago, the population numbered 100,000, besides 50,000 pilgrims who yearly visited the shrines. The island was then called Cuzamil, which means in Maya language "the swallows."

The soil is strewn with vestiges of ancient dwellings that are concealed beneath forests rich with valuable timber. Among the trees are the ebony, brazil-wood, cedar, sapote, ramon, rosewood, and the zac-ha-na (house of white water) under whose roots there is always a spring of pure, clear water. The thickets are alive with pheasants, quails, pigeons and other game. With a little care every kind of tropical fruit, of very fine quality, grows abundantly; vanilla is found wild: plenty of copal can be gathered from the trees, as well as honey and wax, the product of harmless wild bees.

Only labor is needed to turn all this to wealth. The natives have quite as much work as they care to

do, being contented to live from hand to mouth. We found a few Americans from New Orleans and Key West living there. They said that they could make plenty of money if they had good laborers.

Tobacco grown in Cozumel is quite equal to the weed produced in Cuba, and many cigars sold as "Havanas" are from Cozumel, whence they are sent boxed ready for the market. The principal planter there, Mr. J. Anduze, took us through his plantation, fifteen miles from St. Miguel, and gave us a little useful information. When the plant is two feet high, the top is broken off to prevent further growth, that the whole strength and virtue may be taken up by the leaves already formed; only a few plants are left to run to seed. The same soil does not serve for tobacco more than one year, but during that time three crops can be raised. Such leaves as turn yellow before the weed is ready to pluck must be cut off; they are used in second-rate cigars. The ground must be kept perfectly free of all other weeds. When ripe the plant is hung up for eight or ten days, within doors, to dry thoroughly. Each leaf is then separately moistened in a decoction of tobacco and strung on a fine wire. The wires are stretched in lines, one above another,

in a building kept for the purpose. The operation of drying and moistening is repeated four or five times, after which the leaves are tied up in bundles, put in hogsheads, and covered over to "sweat." It is upon this "sweating" operation that the flavor and odor of the cigar depend. The principal occupation of the islanders is tobacco growing and cigar making.

Near the plantation there were some curious little buildings that had once served as temples to a very diminutive race of people, whose existence is proved by whole cities of similarly small houses on the east coast of Yucatan. We examined the edifices, but the owner of the plantation said that there were some much more interesting at a place called Buena Vista. We decided to go, though the Indian selected as a guide said the road was bad. We started with him and his four small hunting dogs, and soon acknowledged that the road might be better. The fact is there was no road, nothing but a footpath through the dense forest, so obliterated in places, owing to the tornado, that even our guide paused from time to time to consider whether he was keeping in the track. We were walking on coral rocks over which there was a perfect net-work of small roots, just like ropes, spreading in every

direction, the interstices being of a most convenient size to catch heel or toe. From time to time the dogs made off in quest of fancied prey; then losing their way, set up a dismal howling for their master to guide them back with his voice. These dogs, though small, fearlessly chase the boar and hold it at bay till the hunter comes to kill it, which is generally done with a wooden spear.

When we had walked about five miles, and were as tired as if we had been tramping for twenty-four hours on a good road, we asked our guide, who had not once opened his lips, except to whistle to his dogs, if we were near Buena Vista. "Not half way," was the crushing reply. We dared not rest for more than a few minutes, as the forest was cool and damp, and we were profusely perspiring from continual efforts to keep from stumbling. Another mile—the rocky hills getting steeper and steeper. Then we observed that our boots were falling to pieces! The Indian seemed to chuckle inwardly at our misery when he informed us that there was no place to rest at Buena Vista, much less any cobbler to mend our boots. It was evident that, even if we came in sight of the old houses—not worth looking at, in the opinion of our guide—this would be a bootless journey anyhow. Our feet were already

blistered ; so we turned homeward, vowing that the next time an Indian said a road was bad we would be content to take his word for it.

We arrived at the plantation limping as though we had been on a nine days' tramp, and before we could reach shelter a shower of rain drenched us to the skin. The consequence was a burning fever all night, our torture being increased by hundreds of tiny wood-ticks that had worked their way under our skin. To complete our chagrin, we were assured, by one who had been there, that at Buena Vista there was a building ornamented with hieroglyphics sculptured in stone : we did not decide to try it again.

Our journey back to the village was a delightful contrast to the attempted trip to Buena Vista. We went, on horseback, along the shore, through groves of palm-trees, passing now and then by plantations where luxuriant sugar-cane and many other products showed the wonderful fertility of the soil, and how at the time when this ancient Mecca was frequented by thousands of devout pilgrims, it could, being thoroughly tilled, easily yield abundant nourishment for all.

We then made up a boat party with some of our countrymen who were trying to form a colony there.

The boat belonged to them; it was not more than fifteen feet long, but big enough to accommodate five people. After an hour's sail along the coast we stopped to see the place where the American colony was to be. It was a lovely spot. The first house was being built. The owner complained bitterly that the native workmen did as little as possible, and charged twice as much as they usually received from their own people.

Further down the coast we stopped at a plantation belonging to Señor Angulo. We had an opportunity to see immense fields of garlic, ginger, sweet potatoes, and sago: from this last article excellent starch is made. These productions are exported principally to British Honduras, Island Muges, and Cuba; a little to the mainland, particularly to Campeche: boats coming from the islands seldom touch at Progreso.

Near Mr. Angulo's habitation we saw a cave only three feet high, within which there is a square room built of comparatively large stones, and having vestiges of colored designs on the outside. In this cave we found the frontal bone of a skull. Judging by its size, one would take it to be that of a child six years old, but its extreme thickness and the condition of the sutures, show that it was that of an adult.

Leaving the plantation we continued our way along the coast, seeking an entrance to a certain lake. Night overtook us before we found it; we therefore hauled our boat up on the beach, and sought shelter in a fisherman's deserted hut.

Next morning, after two hours' sailing, we found the channel by which we were to reach the lake. The boat had to be borne across the beach that there forms a sandbar, over which flows only a few inches of water, to the mouth of the creek. This was about five yards wide, and closed overhead by mangroves. The water proved to be only five feet deep, and with a swift current, as it was low tide, coming from the lake. We struggled forward for about an hour, cutting away the low boughs: as in that time we had only advanced a little more than half a mile, the idea of penetrating to the lake was abandoned. We therefore backed out of the channel and continued along the coast till we came to a place where the water was crystalline and shallow. A number of large conchs lay on the sandy bottom; we secured some and went ashore to breakfast.

The conch-shell is exceedingly hard, but large turtles, that abound in these waters, break them between their jaws without apparent effort. We

roasted some conchs, but found they were much nicer uncooked, though they had to be softened by hammering them with a stone.

We sailed all day, and toward evening saw in the distance some huts that we decided should be our hotel that night. We were lured on by what appeared to be a massive and extensive wall; only after landing we discovered that what looked like a magnificent fortification was in fact millions of shells, principally conchs, that formed a high perpendicular bank. There was also a smaller shelf composed of thousands of tons of dry sponge and seaweed that might be utilized for commercial purposes. Near by, on the top of a rock, was a small shrine and a stone snake-head. Afterward we found others of the same kind at intervals along the coast. They were altars, to which at the time of the conquest—according to the historians—fishermen went to make offerings and burn copal to their divinities of the sea.

Heavy clouds warned us to hasten to our boat, and sail back to the huts. We found them in good condition, and some dry wood close by. Happily the rain held off; we, therefore, soon had a blazing fire, and supper, consisting of coffee, bread, conchs, and a heron, whose breast was even a better tidbit

than that of a young parrot—which is saying a good deal. During the night it rained in torrents, but under shelter of the sheds we were not disturbed by it.

Next morning we sailed to the end of the island, or as near as possible; it is an iron-bound coast that would afford no protection to any shipwrecked crew. We went back a little way, and hauled our boat up on the beach at the end of the bay where we had found shelter the night before. Near by there were turtle tracks, and soon we had transported one hundred eggs from the nest to our boat.

After examining the country around we launched the boat. When it was necessary to put it on the right course every member of the party wanted to be captain; we consequently stranded on the beach five times; each time the sails had to be lowered and the captains to get into the surf to shove off again. When tired of that fun the command was unanimously given to Dr. Le Plongeon. We then succeeded in starting homeward, and reached San Miguel village just in time to escape a tempest, for on entering our house we heard a small lizard making a noise in a corner of the roof; half an hour later a regular “norther” set in. This lizard is small and dark, subsists on insects, and is a veritable living

barometer. It has a loud voice that is never heard except just previous to bad weather: this is so well authenticated that, even if the weather is fair, no sailor will venture out when warned by that lizard.

The roaring wind and heavy rain beating on the broad leaves of the banana-trees around the house prevented us from sleeping. When the storm abated, just as we were passing into dreamland, slumber was rudely dispelled by violent clanging of the church bells. A dozen peaceable citizens, disturbed from their rest, went to see what was the matter. They found an old woman pulling vigorously at the rope. She was quite demented and refused to stop her music. They drove her home, which so provoked her that in the morning she threw one of her grandchildren into a well, saying "it must be killed." The child's father being at hand, it was rescued uninjured, though much terrified.

In the villages throughout Yucatan, baptisms and funerals are great events, a wake being regarded as a mild entertainment. In Cozumel we had occasion to see one of those friendly gatherings.

The patient was a young woman who had lived alone. Being suddenly stricken down in a fit, from which she never recovered, a neighbor had taken

her in. What little property was found in her home—fifty dollars, some gold ornaments, and clothes—was appropriated by the same kind neighbor to defray expenses. The unconscious woman was placed on a camp-bed, and preparations for the wake were at once begun. A demijohn of strong liquor was bought with the money of the patient, also a lot of cake, four pounds of chocolate, and plenty of black wax candles.

Soon the room was full of men and women, regaling themselves with “drinks” and cigarettes. Young girls with flowers in their hair and powder on their faces were seated around the room, in expectation of cake and chocolate. On one table there were sundry small ornaments, and a wooden crucifix before which burned wax candles. On another, a pitcher of water, glasses, cigars, and beneath it, the demijohn of rum.

An old woman came in; the hostess offered her a cigar, which she accepted, saying: “Thank you, ma’am. Have you got her chickens?”

“Yes,” replied the other; “they are all in the coop. She will be dead presently, and they will be killed for this good company.”

“Yes, yes,” rejoined the dame, lighting her cigarette; “woe to us! what are we in this world!”

The wake lasted two days and nights; by the time the woman really expired, her money was all gone. A grave had been dug the day she fell sick; now she was carried to it in a deal coffin. The priest was not called to utter a prayer over the corpse, because, said they, there was no money to pay him.

That affair was a nine days' scandal, even among those simple-minded people.

One Sunday evening we received a pressing invitation to the house of Señor Mendiburu, the Alcalde, whose youngest child was to be baptized. We found the parlor illuminated with three or four lamps, several women seated on one side of the room, men on the other. Upon a table there were goblets, and bottles of ale, more expensive there than the best Spanish wine, hence preferred.

The baby was brought from the bedroom to be taken to church by the sponsors and the male guests, the women remaining at home with the parents. On their return the infant was carried back to the bedroom, no one manifesting the least interest in it.

Sponsors are expected to offer a gift according to their means. In the peninsula, well-to-do families scatter silver *medios* among those who follow the procession to the church. The guests are presented with pretty cards that have a silver or gold coin attached to them. On the card is printed the name

of the child, the date of its birth, and a floral design or verses.

Having baptized the baby, Cura Rejon came to the house of its parents; then the bottles were opened, the host himself handing glasses of ale to the ladies, and inviting the gentlemen to help themselves. He expressed much regret at not having a band of music as intended—the musicians had been called to Island Mugerres—but hoped to do better next time.

It was remarkable that hardly a word was uttered on this occasion—the silence was almost solemn; whereas at the wake there had been much animated conversation. Do they think death less to be regretted than birth? It is a fact that in those countries anciently, when a child was born, the first words addressed to it were: “Alas for thee! thou hast come to this world to suffer and weep.” Looking upon a corpse, they invariably say: “At rest! to suffer and toil no more!” If the deceased is an infant, they wreath it in garlands, exclaiming: “Another little angel!”

Cura Rejon was called from the baptism party to a death-bed. Bidding us good night, he said: “Ah yes! one after another I lay them to rest as they fall like autumn leaves around me, but there will be no

one to minister the last sacrament to poor old Father Rejon when his time comes."

At three o'clock on the following afternoon the funeral cortège started. The cura, dressed in his robes, led the way. On his right walked an acolyth carrying a vessel of holy water; on his left, one with a prayer-book. They were followed by three or four amateur musicians; next, six men bearing the coffin, black, ornamented with white. It was open, the corpse, dressed in black, exposed. A man walked beside, with a table on his head. Men, women, and children, some mourners, others idlers, brought up the rear. The men were bareheaded, the women wore *mantillas* as at church. They looked sad, but the absence of a black hearse, and other funeral paraphernalia, seemed to rid death of half its horrors.

The followers sang a dirge. At each corner the procession halted, the table was put on the ground, and the coffin placed on it. The priest, with his face toward the deceased, then chanted in a sonorous musical voice, the people responding. The sky was black with an approaching storm, the thunder's distant peal mingling its deep tones with theirs, like a note from the grand organ of the Supreme Being. After each prayer the priest sprinkled the corpse with holy water. Thus they slowly wended their

way to the church. At the door the prayers were again repeated; the body was then carried in, the bell tolling while the funeral service was performed.

From the church to the grave the coffin was at the head of the procession, priest and mourners following with the musicians, who played a slow march.

Before lowering the coffin into the earth, the lid was nailed on, and a bottle of rum passed round among those present—a parting cup, to wish the lamented friend godspeed on his long journey.

THE EVIL EYE.*

WE find that in many countries there has been, and there still is, more or less, a belief in the evil effect of certain eyes. The malignant power, supposed to exist, is not said to be due to any particular color, size, or shape of the visual organ. In fact even those who most firmly believe in it do not attribute it to any physical peculiarity, although Boguet affirms that sorcerers have two pupils in one of their eyes, some in both: they mortally bewitch those they look at, and kill them if they keep their eye fixed on them.

In Italy there were sorcerers supposed to devour with a glance the heart of a man. The Egyptians firmly believed in the Evil-Eye, so did the Grecians. In Spain there were people much feared because their eyes could distil poison into those they looked at. One Spaniard, it is reported, had such a powerfully bad eye that he could shatter every pane of glass in a window just by staring at it. Another was employed by the king to gaze on certain crimi-

* Published in "Harper's Bazar."

nals condemned to death, for that sufficed to kill them.

The people in Scotland also have a great dread of the Evil-Eye, believing that the look of certain persons produces very unfortunate results, such as turning milk sour, making goats barren, etc. At Plaudern, near Landerneau, in Brittany, if the left eye of a corpse does not close, one of the nearest relations is threatened by death.

In the lovely island of Cozumel we were acquainted with a good old priest supposed to be the unfortunate possessor of an Evil Eye. An old lady, a near neighbor of his, said to us, in a most impressive manner, "When the Señor Cura admires anything it is just as well to give it to him at once, for as sure as you keep it it will die."

Father Rejon was quite grieved about his eye. He often said to us: "I have done all the good in my power to everybody, never refusing to serve the poor because they could not pay me; yet I have an Evil Eye; I do not know how it happens. One day I walked through a yard without glancing to the right or to the left.—Almost immediately a woman came running after me, saying: 'Oh, Señor Cura, you have looked at my pig, and it has just dropped down dead! You must pay me for it; it is worth

six dollars.' 'What!' I shouted. '*Maldicion!* Go to ——! I have not seen the infernal pig, and you want to make me pay for it!' You see it was enough to make a saint swear," added our mild old friend.

Then he told us another case. "One of my parishioners, who had a very pretty little pig, called on me one day and said: 'I wish to offer my pig to Saint Anthony; you will please celebrate mass, and the pig is yours.' At four o'clock next morning I said the mass, and leaving the pig where it was, sent corn to it every day. When the pig had eaten more than a bushel of grain, and was well fattened, the neighbor paid me another visit. Said he: 'Señor, I will pay you for the corn used, and for the mass, as also for a second one I wish to have celebrated when convenient to you, but I should like to keep my pig.' Of course I had no objection, and told the man I was perfectly satisfied.

"Next morning when I arrived at the church I found a man waiting outside the door with two dollars to pay for the masses. Just as the bells were being rung the owner of the pig rushed up to me. 'Oh, Señor Cura, the pig has swollen; it is dying!' What fault had I? Well, that man did not pay for the corn, and even accepted the two dollars that I offered to return to him.

“On another occasion I wanted to purchase some fowls from an old woman; she didn’t care to part with them. I could not oblige her, nor did I wish to, so dismissed the matter from my mind. I chatted with her awhile, then took my leave; before I reached the garden-gate the fowls fell dead in the yard. Then the woman said: ‘Ah, señor, your Evil Eye has killed all my birds! Why did I not sell them to you?’ What fault had I? The heat of the sun must have killed the birds.”

The topic was so evidently painful to the old gentleman that we told him to dismiss it from his mind, and join us in a game of *malilla*.

A few days later he invited us to go and examine a small ancient building, about a mile from the village. It was ten feet high outside; the interior divided in two rooms, each nine feet long, two wide, and six in height. Three doors led straight through the building, one in each outer wall, the other in the middle; they were twenty inches wide and three feet high.

From one of the outer doorways to that in the division wall there was a pier of solid masonry; on either side of it an opening led under the room. Making our way below as best we could, we found ourselves surrounded by walls made of hewn stones,

each measuring three feet, by twenty inches, by ten inches.

Much lower down there was a *senote* of limpid water that we did not try to reach, the descent being very precipitous, over smooth boulders. In that *senote*, fourteen years before, Cura Rejon had found a small *cantaro* (water-jug), about half the size of those now used by the natives. He kindly gave it to me; it is now in the Museum of Natural History, in Central Park, New York.

At some distance we saw light, reflected on the water, evidently from an opening in the rocky vault. After searching around the house among the thick bushes, we found it. Dr. Le Plongeon, to see within, leaned forward, putting his hand on what he believed was a firm tree-trunk thrown across the hole. The Indian who stood by him said not a word, though the Cura afterwards affirmed that he must have known it was the wild *palma cristi*, which bears no weight.

The Cura and I were on the other side of the cavity, struggling through the bushes to reach the edge of it, when we heard a sound like dry wood being splintered, followed by silence. The bushes prevented us from seeing anything, and the Indian held his tongue. When we reached the brink Dr.

Le Plongeon was making his way out of the pit. The stupid Indian did not even extend his hand to help him up, till the Cura shouted at him. The Doctor had fallen about fifteen feet upon coral rocks, and was very glad to find none of his bones broken, but a little stream of blood immediately dyed the rock on which he had fallen. He bound a handkerchief tightly around his head, saw that, in effect, the water of the *senote* was shimmering in the distance, illuminated from the hole into which he had fallen, then with some difficulty made his way out.

In spite of the handkerchief, blood was running down his face. Fortunately we had a gourd; I asked the Indian to go under the small house to procure water from the *senote*. He said it was very difficult to reach, admitting, when urged, that he was afraid of the spirit of the *senote*. I therefore led the way, the man following unwillingly. He was very tall, but it seemed that I must get the water myself. In hurrying down I narrowly escaped drowning, for my foot slipped and I only saved myself by catching at a projecting stone. Had I fallen I could never have been rescued without ropes. The apathetic Indian afterwards spoke of my danger with the same indifference that he would manifest

in giving an account of a day's work. Cura Rejon told him he ought to be flogged.

In spite of all my efforts I could only bring the gourd within a few inches of the water; still that fellow quietly looked at me risking my life, until I drew my revolver and compelled him to fill the gourd: he was exceptionally superstitious.

Dr. Le Plongeon's forehead was cut from the top to the extremity of the eye-brow, disclosing the bone. We bathed it and bound it tight in a moist handkerchief, to check the flow of blood.

Father Rejon was quite upset, and insisted that it was all due to his Evil Eye! that he would give himself up to the authorities as soon as he reached the village. We had difficulty in dissuading him from so doing.

Under a scorching sun we walked back to our thatched cottage. Then I had to play at surgeon. Certainly the patient was much to be pitied in my hands; nor did I like the business. It was a jagged wound; bled for six hours, in spite of perchloride of iron, and refused to close by first intention. After a new skin had formed, I had to cut it to extract splinters that worked their way to the surface, though we believed they had all been washed out.

Cura Rejon, who said he would never forgive him-

self for having taken us to the *senote*, one day brought a very peculiar leaf to put on the wound. It is thick and pear-shaped. On one side there is a thin skin that, being peeled off, discloses a resinous substance which causes the leaf to adhere to the skin, drawing the lips of any wound together in a very short time. It irritates the nerves, for at the end of a quarter of an hour, Dr. Le Plongeon had toothache, and a pain under his tongue.

The accident at the *senote* was added to the list of evils the worthy village priest attributed to his unfortunate eye.

PYGMIES, REAL AND FICTITIOUS.*

IN almost every country pygmies figure either in history or tradition. Tradition always has some foundation; man only weaves fiction from facts, and the best novelists are close observers of human nature. How many things long regarded as fables have been proved true! Herodotus, the father of history, who lived B.C. 484 years, was once called the father of lies, yet many of the stories told by him have been proved correct. Marco Polo, who in 1274 went with his father to Tartary, China, different parts of India, Persia, and Asia Minor, though an illustrious traveler and writer, was considered very untruthful: nevertheless the more we learn of those countries, the more accurate his accounts appear.

The stories of the "little people," fairies, sprites, and elves, must have originated from the existence of an extremely diminutive race, a vague recollection of which has passed from generation to generation. Fable makes the pygmies two feet high. The Greeks, having known of giants, as if to make a contrast, pic-

* Published in "Scientific American."

tured to themselves these pygmies, getting the idea from certain inhabitants of Ethiopia, called Pechinies, who were very small; perhaps the ancestors of the Dokos of the present day. Swift made Gulliver find men six inches high in the Isle of Lilliput; but Cyrano de Bergerac, in his imaginary voyage to the sun, found people not bigger than his thumb.

Among the many ludicrous stories told of pygmies, is that of a certain King of Bavaria, who, at his wedding-feast, was served with a pie from which a tiny dwarf, armed with lance and sword, jumped out on to the table, to the great astonishment of all the guests.

Apart from such extravagant tales, there are proofs that very dwarfish people have lived and do live, in different places. Some years ago, on the banks of the river Merrimac, twenty miles from the Isle of St. Louis, a number of stone tombs were found arranged in symmetrical order; none of them were more than four feet long, and the human skeletons within them only measured three feet, though the teeth showed that they were adults; the skulls were out of proportion with the rest of the body.

Aristotle, who was a great naturalist, said that trustworthy witnesses testified to the existence of

minute men; that they lived in caves washed by the waters of the Nile. Pliny even gives various details regarding their habits, and the geographical position of the places where they dwelt. On the banks of the upper Nile, where the Greeks located the pygmies, modern travelers have found whole tribes of dwarfish men.

In Russia and Turkey, until quite lately, great sympathy was felt for dwarfs, they being generally considered keen-witted and often talented. In Germany, in the eighteenth century, a dwarf was regarded as a necessary appendage to every noble family. In this present century there have been isolated cases of extremely small people, as, for instance, Richebourg, who died in Paris in 1858 at the age of ninety; he was twenty-three inches high. During the revolutionary period he is said to have passed in and out of Paris, as an infant in the arms of a nurse, with dispatches very dangerous to carry, wrapped in his baby clothes.

In Mexico, especially in the State of Yucatan, and adjacent islands, there are many stories current about dwarfs. If the natives are questioned concerning the builders of the old ruined edifices found in those parts, they invariably say, "The Aluxob (pygmies) built them." In the islands of Cozumel

and Mugerres there is a firmly rooted belief that "little people" wander around at night; many solemnly protest that they see them, and accuse them of disturbing their slumbers by hammering on benches and shaking their hammocks.

On the east coast of Yucatan there are various places, such as Nisucte and Meco, that any traveler may visit, though he must go armed, and keep a sharp look-out for Indians, who may fall upon him at any minute. There can be seen vestiges of ancient cities, all the houses made of stone, but not large enough for people more than three or three and a half feet high to occupy with any comfort.

In Cozumel Island there exist well-constructed triumphal arches only nine feet high; sanctuaries, and temples of worship, built of carefully hewn stones; the doorway of the largest three feet high, one foot six inches wide. The entire building measures, outside, but nine feet in height, fourteen in length, and twelve in depth. The Indian who accompanied us to them affirmed that he always saw the "little people" at night, but they never spoke to him. He said: "They are very small, and wear big hats. Once, at the entrance of a cave in the forest, I found a clay figure. It was an enchanted dwarf, and he was reading a book. I picked it up to

carry it home, then felt afraid and put it down again. Next day I returned to look for it, because I wanted to have the *alux* (dwarf), but could not find the place again."

It is affirmed that very diminutive people still dwell among the hills in Honduras and Guatemala; but no one seems able to say exactly where. This would lead to the belief that if there are any still living, as so many assert, they must be very few, and successful in hiding. Nevertheless, it is related that one day, in the year 1825, woodcutters, wandering along the banks of the Moho river, British Honduras, in search of mahogany trees, were startled, upon reaching a place called Meditation Fall, by a strange little being that suddenly emerged from the bush, stared wildly at them, and fled.

The men pursued, overtook, and brought the odd creature to their camp. It was a dark-skinned girl, about eighteen years old, not quite three feet high. She had no other covering than her hair—thick, black tresses that reached to her feet, nearly covering her. She was very wild, but not stupid. Finding that they did not harm her, she talked to the wood-cutters in the Maya tongue, which they also spoke, that being the language of the Indians in those parts.

As the weather was cool one of the men gave her a red flannel shirt, which clothed her from head to foot. For a day or two she refused to eat, but afterwards seemed contented. She said all her people were the same size as herself; that they were then living near Meditation Fall, where they had a cornfield, though generally they dwelt three or four miles away in a deep valley.

When she had been in the camp about ten days, some of the men proposed to go and see her people. She manifested delight, and offered to guide them to the spot. Reaching the place where they first met her, she led them into the forest. Soon she motioned to them to stop and be silent. A hubbub of voices reached their ears; the girl whispered to them that she would go and announce their coming, otherwise her folks would be afraid, run off, and hide on hearing footsteps. Away she darted; and soon all was hushed as death.

The men waited patiently; their diminutive guide did not return. Convinced that she had very cunningly eluded them, they went forward, and in two minutes found themselves in a cornfield. There were embers in three or four places, and small piles of corn prepared for transportation. The ground had been much trodden, but there was no living

creature in sight. They searched in vain, even among the boulders, and remained some time in the field, hoping that the owners would return for their corn. They, however, never saw the girl again, nor any of her kin.

One of those very woodsmen gave us this account. Similar stories have been told by others ; they might all be doubted were it not for the ruins of diminutive houses that bear witness to their having once existed.

TRAVELING WITH TURTLES.*

HAVING waited long for an opportunity to leave Cozumel Island for British Honduras, we decided to go on the *Triunfo* notwithstanding its uninviting appearance. It was a twelve-ton schooner, badly in need of paint; as for order, the limited space made that impossible. The captain, called Antonio, was as unclean a specimen of the Spanish sailor as we have ever had the misfortune to see. The mate was "Antonio the Second," to distinguish him from his superior; black "Jim" was cook and general assistant; a man named Trejo serving as pilot. There was no compass on board. Such a thing can rarely be found on those coasting vessels.

There were four passengers besides ourselves, all of us having plenty of luggage. Add to this twenty-five enormous turtles; some on deck, some below; a large party of hens; two big cages full of doves; another of canaries; a spoiled lapdog; cat and kittens; two goats; and a colony of cockroaches of the

* Published in "New York Tribune."

largest species. There was not a square inch to spare.

The cabin was occupied by live turtles, they being considered the most valuable passengers: these unfortunate creatures were on their backs, their flaps sown together. They evidently suffered, stretching their necks to gasp for breath, making most dismal sounds in the vain endeavor to fill their lungs, and drawing their heads back into their shells at the approach of any one. To keep them alive water was dashed over them once a day, which favor they did not seem to appreciate as much as they might have done had the water been thrown on their backs.

We more than suspected that there was a considerable amount of "contraband" on board; were also well aware that the coast-guard was cruising about on the look-out for just such vessels as the *Triunfo*; consequently the grim face of the captain did not often relax into a smile. He betrayed his anxiety by asking for the loan of our field-glasses very frequently, rather to our annoyance, for there was much that interested us to be seen on the coast. In return for the use of the glass Antonio gave us some information. Among other things he said that all along the coast there is a fine variety of excellent shellfish;

that one crab, called the "soldier," also known as "hermit," possesses remarkable curative properties. Simply boiled and eaten every day, it cures nervous diseases and consumption; while a certain oil extracted from it is an infallible remedy for palsy and other ills. Of course! During our brief stay at Nizucte we saw a man cook, and eat with great relish, a few "hermits." He was poisoned by them, and came within an inch of losing his life.

One of the Indian villages along the coast is called Tancah; shortly after the occasion I write about our Ark of the Carribean went down near there. A French bark, bound for Vera Cruz, stranded near the village; it was believed that the Indians killed those on board, and sent the bodies adrift, for they floated down the Gulf Stream to Cozumel. The Indians took possession of the bark.

On this coast, as in many other countries, the wreck of a vessel is considered a godsend, the inhabitants thinking they have a right to kill the crew and take possession of the ship and its contents. The people of Tancah and another village called Tulum have no boats; so at low tide they made fast a rope to the vessel, and used it to go back and forth, landing as much of the cargo as they could. Craving for liquor, as always, they went down into the hold, where

some remained drinking till unable to move, being consequently drowned at flood-tide.

The inhabitants of San Pedro, a fishing settlement on the Island of Ambergris, at the south end of Yucatan, heard of the wreck. They are half pirates, and at once started off for a share of the spoils. The Indians, always hostile to strangers, received them with bullets; they could not reach the ship. When the Indians abandoned it, leaving in it what they could not carry, they retired from the beach. The people of San Pedro and Island Mugerres had been keeping a sharp look-out; they now came for the rest of the cargo.

They were not molested, and found costly dry goods and other valuable articles, also casks of fine wine and vinegar. In the hold there were many dead Indians.

Having loaded their boats they were about to start for home, when they saw that a storm was at hand. The captains decided that it would not do to venture out to sea until it passed over. Joaquin Carballo, owner of the *Triunfo*, said he was more afraid of the Indians who might arrive, than of the storm. Contrary to the advice of his companions he put to sea, and was never heard of again.

Three miles north of Tancah, at a place called

Tulum (castle), a grand old castle towers on the brink of a precipitous cliff against which the waves dash with fury. It serves as a good landmark to mariners, being the highest point along the coast. That spot also presents the wildest scenery in the country, its iron-bound coast reminding us of the south end of Cozumel, though much grander and more wild.

The ancient city was surrounded on three sides by a wall that had watch-towers at the corners. There are two gateways in the north and south walls; one in the east. This fortification was composed of rough, flat stones, laid upon each other without mortar or cement, and varied in thickness between seven and twelve feet. The high precipitous cliff forms a sea wall, 1,500 feet long, on the east side. The Spanish historians inform us that among the Mayas the Ruler and his nobles had their dwellings all inclosed by a great wall in the centre of the city, the rest of the people living outside. From their works we also learn that when the conquerors, under command of Captain Grijalva, crossed from Cozumel, they saw, toward sunset, a burg so large that "Seville would not have appeared better." There was a very lofty tower, and on the shore a crowd of natives, bearing standards that

they raised and lowered, to invite the travelers to join them.

Within the great wall of Tulum, which has a circuit of 2,800 feet, we yet see several buildings, that were at one time decorated with beautiful stucco ornaments and fresco paintings.

The grand old castle, including a wing on each side, measures at the base one hundred feet in length. The entrance faces inland, and is reached by a stairway thirty feet wide, with twenty-four steps. On each side it has a broad balustrade.

There are two rooms, twenty-six feet in length; low stone benches run along the walls, on which are seen imprints of the red hand.

The east wall has no opening, except small oblong holes for ventilation.

The wings are buildings of two stories, both together being much lower than the main structure. The stairs leading to the second floor are outside.

A peculiar feature in the edifices of Tulum is that some had flat ceilings, not found elsewhere in the peninsula.

Three miles from the ancient city is a new village, Tulum Pueblo, whose inhabitants come regularly to the old castle to burn copal, incense, and wax candles; and practise rites of the religion of their fore-

fathers. These people are ruled by a queen, named Maria Uicab. It is as much as one's life is worth to land at Tulum; the natives being very hostile, make it necessary to be always on the alert and ready to take to the boat or fight.

At dusk the captain of our craft ordered Antonio the Second to tell "Jim," the cook, to make a clearing on deck so that the passengers could lie down. With difficulty room was made for four or five. Two individuals from Spanish Honduras at once carefully monopolized it all by spreading a huge mattress for their own particular benefit, while we had to sit upright in the small space left.

As we were skirting the edge of the Gulf Stream, about midnight, waves washed over the deck. The Honduras people and their dog were not disturbed by it, being under a large sheet of oilcloth lined with blankets. We went down into the little hole called cabin, to find that the turtles did not leave room for more than one person. The atmosphere was sickening, but having a severe cold I remained below, sitting on the floor among the turtles, keeping out of reach of their horny bills, lest they should visit their just wrath on my innocent head.

After a while, insensibly to myself, one of my fellow sufferers was utilized as a pillow. I was aroused

by members of the cockroach colony that seemed to have selected me as a site to hold a mass meeting. From a second troubled doze upon my turtle pillow I was awakened by a shout and, going to the foot of the scuttle, saw my husband holding the tiller, giving orders in not sweet Spanish. His attention had been attracted by a strange sound; peering through the darkness he saw that the boat was sailing straight toward breakers, but a few yards ahead. A glance showed him that the man at the helm was sound asleep; he pushed him aside and veered the boat.

Not even a star glimmered overhead; we therefore went back about half a mile and hove to till morning. Daylight showed that we were entirely out of our course, and had been close upon the reefs at the entrance of Ascension Bay, where the water is very deep and alive with sharks.

Ascension Bay is eight miles wide at the mouth, eleven miles in its broadest part, north and south, thirteen miles east and west. The greatest depth of water is eleven feet. Across the entrance there is a sandbar where the water is but six feet deep.

Only fishermen now approach this bay to stay for a few days at a time, on a cay called Culebra, or Snake, at the entrance, because all the territory

around is in possession of hostile Indians; though they do not often go there, even to cut the excellent logwood that grows so abundantly. Some years ago much ambergris was also found in the bay; the largest piece discovered there weighed eight pounds two ounces. It was sold for \$270 in the city of Valladolid, Yucatan.

Behind the reefs, about a mile from the entrance of the bay, there is a good anchorage where large vessels can safely anchor in from eighteen to twenty-three feet of water.

On the third day out we reached the Island of Ambergris, and stopped at San Pedro, a picturesque fishing village, surrounded by groves of cocoanut palms.

Here, our suspicions of there being contraband on board were verified, for at dusk about 20,000 cigars were slyly put into a small dory, and taken ashore with many precautions, to be afterwards conveyed to Belize on fishermen's boats.

There was no lodging for us in the village; we therefore passed a horrible night on deck, lying on coiled ropes and sails, a thick mist falling upon us

Soon after sunrise we started, but were almost becalmed for several hours, so did not sight the city of Belize, thirty-five miles from San Pedro, till four

o'clock in the afternoon. As we neared the harbor, our pilot succeeded in running us on to mud banks three times. On the third we might have remained all night, had not a "colored lady and gentleman," sailing their own small boat, come to our assistance.

The man got on board the *Triunfo* and helped us into deeper water, for which we were duly grateful. He accepted from the captain some Cozumel cigars. At dusk we cast anchor in the harbor of Belize, capital of British Honduras.

We were urgently requested by Antonio the First to defer landing until after dark, because they wanted to smuggle in a few thousand cigars that were still on board, and several demijohns of Havana rum. At nine o'clock we were put ashore on a lonely wharf, with only the stars to guide our footsteps, and tendered hospitality for the night at the house of the man who owned the cigars, a tobacconist established in the city.

THE CARIBS.*

WHEN in Belize, we had opportunities of learning something about the interesting people called Caribs or Caras, a word meaning *brave man*. They are supposed to have existed as a powerful race in prehistoric times, and to have spread over many parts of the globe, their name varying a little in each place. They themselves say they came from the North; some traditions found among them make the plains of Florida their cradle. They were in a complete state of decadence at the time of the discovery of America; yet heritage was still carefully regarded in the reigning family, great respect being shown to the princes and to their religious tenets. They were obedient to their laws, and clung tenaciously to ancient customs.

The Caribs in British Honduras go to the city of Belize to sell yams and a kind of bread called cazave, made from the yuca plant. This bread is in the form of large, thin, crisp cakes, and is almost tasteless.

* Published in "New York Tribune."

In a crowd these strange people at once attract attention by their peculiar language. It sounds like the following syllables constantly repeated with great rapidity—*gloo-ga log-boo-ga-loog*. Strange to say they use the French numerals up to ten, though French is hardly spoken in British Honduras. It sounds odd to hear *un, deux, trois, quatre* mingled with their *gloo-gloo* talk. The reason of it is that those particular Caribs come from Saint Vincent, once a French colony, in the West Indies.

The women dress in skirts, but have no jacket over their low-necked undergarment. They twist a gaudy striped kerchief round their heads as a turban, and wear all the ornaments they can obtain, a favorite necklace being a string of gold or silver coin. They are not accustomed to eat with their husbands, or associate with them as companions. Tradition has it that Carib men captured these women from another tribe and made them their wives; the women then swore that they would never be their companions, though compelled to serve them.

It was rumored that Caribs dwelling at Stan Creek, a settlement not far from Belize, every year made human sacrifice. The late Sir Frederick Barlee, at that time Lieutenant-Governor of the colony, made inquiries to put a stop to it if possible, Stan Creek

being within his jurisdiction. The accounts were, however, rather conflicting. It seems that once a year fifteen or sixteen Caribs, accompanied by their wives, retire to an empty, well-cleaned house away in the woods. They go in procession to the beating of a drum, taking with them one male child five or six years old, whose mother is compelled to remain in the village. They allow no one to follow them, beyond their number; and when asked to give an account of their proceedings say: "After we shut ourselves in the house, we light a big fire in the middle of the floor (the earth serves as floor), and stand round it. Then we lie down with our faces to the ground, leaving the child standing in our midst (where the fire is). When we look up the boy has disappeared—he is carried away by Mafia."

They return to the village without the child; it is never again seen or heard of. When urged to say what they have done with it, they reply that they have given it to Mafia to educate. Every year one child disappears in that way, no one being able to discover what they really do with it, because, when in the great hut where they perform their mysterious rite, they take every precaution to prevent one from peeping in. Some assert that no boy is sacrificed, though they do worship an invisible being that they

regard as an evil power; yet they make nothing to represent it, and worship no good being.

When we ourselves questioned a Carib about the terrible Mafia, he said it was the Devil, that was why they worshiped him; not God, for God was good. "Mafia," said he, "always carries away the boy that is offered to him." We asked if he thought the Devil ate the boy, desiring to find out whether they practiced a little cannibalism; but his very prudent answer was, "Maybe." Nevertheless, among the mountains of Guatemala, where, even a few years ago, the true Caribs could be found, they from time to time indulged in eating a young child or old person; more by way of a sacrifice than to gratify their appetites. The Caribs in Guatemala were almost white, those in British Honduras are very dark.

They also have a dance called "Mafia's dance," in which they make a maiden as intoxicated as possible, undress her, then form a circle round her and dance, performing all sorts of silly antics; a banquet being spread in an adjoining room for the benefit of Mafia. The authorities at Stan Creek forbade the dance; which order only resulted in the Caribs going further away to accomplish it.

They are polygamists, may have as many wives as they can build houses for; because each must have

a separate home. When a man desires to make any woman his wife he proposes to her, and, if she accepts him, clears a patch of ground; builds a hut; plants banana trees; then takes her there. They have no marriage ceremony of their own; occasionally a Carib is now married to his first wife by the Catholic priest.

The women do all the work, even cultivating the ground. They have to provide for themselves and their children, as well as for the husband when he visits them. If a woman ventures to marry one who is not a Carib, she is liable to be tied to a post, naked, and whipped by any one who chooses to inflict the penalty on her. If a man among them leaves his people when a child, he must return within a certain period and build a house, or be thenceforth an outcast. A boy, who had been taken into a white family, when asked if he would not like to go back to his people, said: "Not till I am a little bigger, because they might give me to Mafia."

A Methodist minister who was some time in Stan Creek said the Caribs were very honest and harmless, but great drunkards; that he thought they would not kill a child as they feared the sight of human blood. They, however, can roast a live one without seeing blood.

As boatmen the Caribs are very daring. In their exceedingly small dories, they stand upright generally, and when seen from a short distance, appear to be walking on the waves. With the utmost confidence they paddle about in deep water, swarming with sharks, though if their little boat capsized they would almost inevitably be devoured.

REMARKABLE WELLS AND CAVERNS.*

YUCATAN is one of the most interesting States of Mexico, owing to the splendid ancient palaces and temples of once grand cities, now hidden in the forests. That country also presents great attractions for geologists and botanists, as well as naturalists, who there find rare and beautiful birds, insects, and reptiles.

There are no rivers on the surface of the land, but in many parts it is entirely undermined by extensive caverns in which there are basins of water fed by subterranean currents. The caverns are delightfully cool even at midday; the fantastic forms of some of the stalactites and stalagmites, a never-ending source of interest. There are long winding passages and roomy chambers following one after another for great distances. Here and there, through some chink in the stony vault above, a sunbeam penetrates, enabling us to see, to the right and left, openings leading to untrodden places in the bowels of the earth.

As few of these caves have been explored, the

* Published in "Scientific American."

wildest accounts are given by the natives concerning the dark recesses where only wild beasts seek shelter. Before venturing far in, it is advisable to secure one end of a ball of twine at the entrance, keeping the ball in hand ; nor is it safe to go without lanterns or torches, lest we step into some yawning chasm or deep water. The leader of one exploring party suddenly saw a very dark spot just before him ; he jumped over, instead of stepping on it, and told the others to halt. Examination proved the dark patch to be a pit that seemed bottomless.

Awe-inspiring as are the interiors of some of these caves, they are frequently most beautiful. The natural pillars are often grand in dimensions and sparkling with various hues, while stalactites and stalagmites sometimes resemble familiar objects with astonishing perfection. It is, however, not advisable to place implicit confidence in accounts of the natives ; for the reality, no matter how beautiful, can hardly be equal to what the vivid imagination of the Indian has pictured. Anything bearing the least resemblance to a woman is called "a most beautiful Virgin Mary." Fantastic flutings become an "organ ;" a level rock "an altar." Only once we were not disappointed, when, having been told to look for a pulpit, we found one that appeared as if

man must have fashioned it ; supported on a slender pyramidal base, the upper part very symmetrical, and ornamented with a perfect imitation of bunches of grapes and other fruit.

As already said, in these caves there are sheets of water, some very large, others only a few feet in circumference, fed by subterranean currents. When the water is clear and sweet, it is peopled by a kind of bagre, called by the natives *tsau*, also a blind fish of the *silurus* species. There are likewise medicinal and thermal waters, by bathing in which many people claim to have been cured of most painful and obstinate diseases.

Strange stories are told of some of these waters. Of one it is said that those who approach it, without holding their breath, fall dead. People who live near the place swear it is so, and say the water appears to boil on such occasions. From the thermal waters, in some cases 100 feet below the soil, and not to be reached except by buckets let down through an opening in the rock, warm vapors issue at early morn ; but when the sun is high the water is cool and pleasant to drink.

The name *senote*, from the Maya word *jonot*, is given to all these deposits of water, also to some immense natural circular wells from 50 to 300 feet

in diameter. The walls are more or less perpendicular, generally covered with tropical vegetation. In some there is a swift current, but no inlets or outlets are visible. The water is deliciously pure and sweet, much better than that of wells opened by man in the same country. These enormous deposits generally have a rugged path, sometimes very steep, leading to the water's edge. Daring natives throw themselves from the brink; afterward ascending by stout roots that hang like ropes down the sides; the trees above sucking through these roots the life-sustaining fluid more than a hundred feet below.

In the west part of Yucatan there is a village called *Bolonchen* (nine wells), because in the public square there are nine circular openings cut through a stratum of rock. They are mouths of one immense cistern, whether natural or made by hand the natives do not know; in times of drought it is empty; which shows that it is not supplied by any subterranean spring. The inhabitants then depend entirely on water found in a cave a mile and a half from the village. It is perhaps the most remarkable cavern in the whole country.

The entrance is magnificently wild and picturesque. It is necessary to carry torches, for the way is dark and dangerous. After advancing sixty or

seventy feet we descend a strong, rough ladder twenty feet long, placed against a very precipitous rock. Not the faintest glimmer of daylight reaches that spot. After a while we stand on the brink of a perpendicular precipice, the bottom of which is strongly illuminated through a hole in the surface rock more than 200 feet above. Standing on the verge of this awful pit in the dim light, the rocks and crags seem to take on most grotesque shapes. We go down into the great hole by a ladder eighty feet high, twelve wide ; and, reaching the bottom, are as yet but at the mouth of the cave, which, by the bye, is called *Xtacunbil Xunan* (the hidden lady); because, say the Indians, a lady was stolen from her mother and hidden there by her lover. Now, to our right, we find a narrow passage, and soon another ladder ; the darkness is intense ; the descent continuous, though irregular, like a series of hills and dales ; ladders being placed against the steepest places.

After an exhausting journey we reach a vast chamber, from which crooked passages lead in various directions to wells, seven in all, each named according to its peculiar kind of water. One, always warm, is called *chocohá* (hot water) ; another, *Ocelhá* (milky water); and *Akabhá* (dark water). About 400 paces away from the chamber, passing through

a very low narrow passage, there is a basin of (red water) *chachá*, that ebbs and flows like the sea; receding with the south wind, increasing with the northwest.

To reach the most distant well, we go down yet one more ladder, the seventh. On one side there is a perpendicular wall, on the other a yawning gulf; so that when one of the steps, merely round sticks tied with withes, gives way beneath our feet, we tightly grasp the one above. Having reached the bottom of the ladder, we crawl slowly and painfully through a broken, winding passage about 300 feet long; then see before us a basin of crystalline water; and how thirsty we are! This basin is 1,400 feet from the mouth of the cave, and about 450 feet below the earth's surface. Several hundred people during five months in every year depend entirely on that source for all the water they use. With their frail pitchers and flaring torches they wend their way, gasping for breath, through the intricate passages. The journey back is even harder, for they are tired and loaded; yet these people are such lovers of cleanliness that, arriving at their poor huts, before tasting food, they will use some of the water that has cost them so much, to bathe their smoke-be-

grimed skin. As several women once fainted in the cave, men now always fetch the water.

Yucatan is, and has been for ages past, quite free from earthquakes, while all surrounding countries are from time to time convulsed. This immunity may be due to the vast caverns and numerous great wells existing throughout the land. Pliny the Elder was of opinion that if numerous deep wells were made in the earth to serve as outlets for the gases that disturb its upper strata, the strength of the earthquakes would be diminished; if we may judge by Yucatan, Pliny was right in his conjectures. After him other scientists, who have carefully studied the subject, have expressed the same opinion with regard to the efficacy of large wells

IDOLATRY IN YUCATAN.

WHEN Hernando Cortez was on his way to Honduras, he stopped at a place called Zac Peten, or White Island, where he and his followers were very kindly received, the inhabitants even giving them various presents.

There, the Spaniards killed a number of deer in order to provide themselves with an abundant supply of dried venison. The deer were exceedingly numerous in those forests, because the natives never killed them; the historian Cogolludo says they were held sacred.

After several successive hunts, the horse of Cortez, being either hurt or exhausted, could not proceed on the journey, so its owner left it with the people of Zac Peten, telling them that he would some day return for it.

Those people had never before seen horses, and perceiving how much Cortez cared for the animal, they considered that it must be a creature gifted with intelligence. They called it *Chaac Tzimin*, or *thunder and lightning horse*, because, having seen

Cortez fire from its back to kill the deer, they supposed that the horse was the cause of the report and flash which reminded them of thunder and lightning.

They decided that the Chaac tzimin should be fed on what they thought the nicest food; and accordingly offered it plenty of well-cooked flesh and fowl; also presenting to it bouquets of flowers as they were accustomed to do with their superiors.

History does not say whether the horse ate the flowers; but the fact is that so much kindness, and such overwhelming honors, resulted in his death; for the poor beast was kept a prisoner on one spot, and thus soon starved.

Those in whose charge it had been left were terrified at the idea of not being able to return it to Cortez. They therefore made an image of stone and mortar, as much like the horse as they possibly could, and of the same size. This they placed in a temple that held a thousand people, and thenceforth treated it with great reverence; so that Cortez, if he returned, might understand that his horse had not died from want of attention or consideration on their part.

About ninety years later, in 1618, two priests went to Peten Itza with the object of trying to convert

the Indians to Christianity. They were accompanied by some natives of Yucatan who did all in their power to dissuade the fathers from their purpose, leading them through the roughest places they could find. On their arrival the chiefs and people received them kindly, treating them with great hospitality; only when it was suggested that they should change their religion, they said the time for that had not yet come. The fathers were allowed to go where they pleased and examine everything. They found various large temples that would each accommodate about a thousand people, and in one of them was the image of Cortez's horse, now become the most sacred of all their venerated images. It was placed in the very middle of the temple, resting upon its haunches, the fore part of the body reared so that the front limbs were straight, the hoofs touching the floor.

They called it the "thunder god," and told the priests all about it. Then Friar Juan de Orbita, the most excitable of the two fathers, mounted on the back of the horse, and, using a stone as a hammer, broke it into small pieces, scattering them over the floor of the temple, at which the Indians were so exasperated that they raised a great outcry: "Kill them! kill the white men! they have destroyed our

thunder god ; let them die for the injury they have done ! ”

The priests, instead of showing fear, knowing well the language of the natives, scolded them for their idolatry; made a long speech explaining the Christian doctrine, and showed them the crucifix, by which they gathered that they must worship the cross instead of the horse. They were so thoroughly mystified that they went quietly to their chief Canek. Seeing that he said very little, they too held their peace.

The fathers, however, could not induce anyone to become Christian ; so they left the island in their canoe, taking with them handsome presents from the chiefs, who told them to return at some future time. The people pelted them with small stones after they were in the boat ; then stood on the shore mimicking all they had done.

A few hours later a canoe suddenly came across that of the fathers. In it were several of the natives from Zac Peten. They had painted themselves black, were armed with bows and arrows, and had followed unseen, by another route, on purpose to kill the fathers, so that, as they said, no other white man would go to Peten to destroy things and bother them.

Those who accompanied the Spaniards, and had so earnestly advised them not to go, now used all their powers of persuasion to save their lives, saying that there was no need to kill them since they were going away. It was only due to their kind efforts that the priests were spared to tell the tale.

In the forests of Yucatan dwell many Indian families, scattered here and there, forming very small hamlets, in out-of-the-way places, to avoid being taxed or called upon for military service. They of course have few comforts; contenting themselves with corn, black beans, and red pepper.

Having no education they are not troubled by any ambition save that of keeping their liberty, and going through life with as little labor as possible. The all-important object in their existence is corn; the only work they never neglect is the cultivation of that grain. In the same field they plant beans, the vines twining around the corn stalks.

Their method of preparing the soil for seed is exactly the same as that in use by some of the people in Equatorial Africa. In the dry season, trees are felled in any chosen part of the forest, and reduced to ashes in order to enrich the thin coating of loam that covers the very stony soil. After the first

showers have fallen the grain is dropped into small holes made with a pointed stick by the sower, who, with his foot, spreads over it a little earth.

While sojourning in the deserted city of Chichen Itza, we heard that some of those simple people, living not far from the ruins, had an ancient statue that they worshiped as a divinity. Investigation proved the report true.

The statue is kept in a cave, or rather, mine, that has been formed by digging out *zaccab*, a white earth used with lime for making mortar. It represents a man with a long beard, kneeling; his arms upraised so that the hands are on a level with the head; the hands themselves spread wide open, palms upward. On the back of the figure there is something that may have represented a musical instrument, but the natives call it *buleuah*, a cake made of black beans and ground corn. Perhaps it is owing to this fancy that they have made it their god of agriculture. It is not so easy to understand why they call it *Zactalah* (the blow, or slap of a white man). The Indians, being beardless themselves, perhaps concluded that the statue must be that of a white man; and the uplifted hands may suggest to them a readiness to strike; although the posture is one of adoration. There are several figures like this, sculptured

in bas-relief on the capitals of pillars in an ancient castle at Chichen Itza. The faces are unlike those of any American race, having decidedly Assyrian features.

Zactalah is no longer white, but grimed with the smoke of many candles that its faithful worshipers burn around it. Before setting fire to the trees that lie in their future corn-field, they carry to the blackened idol, a cool beverage called *Zaca*; at the same time they burn incense, believing to gratify his olfactory organ, and surround him with lighted wax candles, beseeching him to make the trees burn thoroughly.

When they plant, they again go to *Zactalah*, to make similar offerings in order that they may obtain abundant crops, and that no destructive animals may get into the fields to uproot the tender sprouts.

All these favors having been granted, the good people are not ungrateful. As soon as the grain is ripe, before reaping the harvest, they gather the most perfect ears for *Zactalah*. These *primitiæ* are cooked and prepared in various ways; then men, women, and children, all leave the hamlet very early in the morning, and go in pilgrimage to the

cave, carrying their offerings; bread and liquor for their own use; a very inferior violin and a large *tunkel*. This is a quaint old musical instrument; a piece of wood about three feet long and one foot in diameter, hollowed out; on one side it has a long narrow mouth; on the other, two oblong tongues that almost meet in the middle. Its mouth is placed on the ground, and the tongues, like two keys, are struck with short sticks, whose ends are covered with india-rubber to make them rebound. The sound produced is like a great rumbling in the earth, and can, when the wind is favorable, be heard five or six miles off. The word *tunkel* means *to be worshipping*, and the natives use the instrument in all their ancient ceremonies.

Having arrived at the cave of Zactalah, the women begin their devotions by removing their garments that have gathered dust on the road, replacing them by clean ones. Then kneeling before the image, beads in hand, they chant the prayers and litanies of the Romish church, the violin and *tunkel* accompanying their voices. What a combination of pagan and Christian worship!

The prayers are alternated with dancing, by the women only; every now and then all take a little

fire-water (rum), and when they feel hungry some bread, or *posole*, another preparation of corn.

In this way they pass hour after hour, till the sun is low in the west; then wend their way homeward through forest paths, happy in the thought that they have faithfully performed a religious duty.

The high priest of this venerated image is a white man, his assistant being an Indian named Ku, a medicine-man.

The devotees of Zactalah, hearing that we had discovered a grand altar supported by fifteen stone images (caryatids), came to ask us if they could look at them; and having taken a particular fancy to one, begged to be allowed to carry it away.

"What for?" we asked. They replied, "We will have it in our village, build a nice shrine for it, and it shall be our patron saint; we will light the best wax candles for it, and burn plenty of copal so that it may protect us, because it is an enchanted soul."

Not believing them greatly in need of a new god, we found an excuse for refusing their request.

In fact there is not a bit less idolatry among those people now, perhaps we are safe in saying that there is more, than before Christianity was introduced among them; at least their divinities are more

numerous : for now they worship images of saints, as well as other figures, firmly believing that they have power to do them good or harm ; while anciently such figures but represented ideas, or served to remind them of something higher, as those in the Catholic church are intended to do.

NEW-YEAR'S DAY AMONG THE MAYAS.*

THE Mayas, like the ancient Egyptians, had a solar, or astronomical year of twelve months; and a lunar, or civil year divided into eighteen months of twenty days; to which were added—to make 365—five days that had no name. The first month of the civil year was called Pop. It commenced on what is for us July 16, ending on August 5.

The first day of *Pop* was a general holiday, also a day of special worship. Those who could possibly afford it then had everything new—clothing, utensils, and furniture; even the household images that they venerated were provided with new garments. All discarded things, every particle of rubbish and dirt, were carried outside of the town or village. No one thought of touching anything thus thrown away, even though they might see useful articles, and be greatly in need of them.

Previous to New-Year's Day the priests and those

* Published in "Harpers Bazar."

gentlemen who wished to take part in certain religious ceremonies, abstained from all indulgence that might give them any gratification; and fasted a longer or shorter time, according to the strength of their devotion to the gods. Some fasted three months (sixty days), others only one. Once having commenced a fast, none would dare to break it until the end of the year, believing that if they did, dire misfortune would befall them. Throughout their fast they painted themselves black. The priests meanwhile elected four officials to assist them in the religious services of New-Year's Day. These assistants, called *chacob*, were supposed to represent the gods of rain and agriculture, also called *chacob*. The duty of the four men elected was to make a number of balls and cakes of incense needed for the occasion.

On the first day of *Pop*, those who had prepared themselves by fasting and other abstinence, washed off all the black paint, putting on red instead. We may suppose that the black paint signified the death of the old year; as for the red they considered it very becoming, using it because it was fashionable. It might on that particular occasion have been also symbolical of the *new fire*, likewise kindled on the first day of the year.

The priests and gentlemen assembled in the court-yard of the temple, with only a few aged women who had to dance. Before the ceremony began, many people came to deposit in the court-yard abundant presents in the shape of food and drink, with plenty of *balché*, the nectar of the gods, all of which was for the benefit of those who had patiently fasted. But first the rite must be observed.

The priests began by purifying the temple and the yard with incense; then the devil had to be cast out. This was done by passing a rope all round the yard, a *chac* being seated at each corner; an assistant was given some incense and a goblet of *balché* to carry outside of the village. He was strictly forbidden to taste the nectar.

Then the four *chacob* made the *new fire*, produced by rubbing together two pieces of wood, one hard, the other soft. It is a most interesting fact that the *pireos* or Magi priests in Persia, when their sacred fire went out—which they considered a great misfortune—had to kindle it in the purest way possible; this they did by *rubbing two pieces of dry wood together*, or by concentrating the solar rays, by means of mirrors or lenses, on something inflammable. They renovated their fire once a year, at the time of the summer solstice.

In the splendid Temple of the Sun at Cuzco, Peru, there were vestals who, like the young Levite girls educated in the Temple of Jerusalem, had to weave the ornaments of the temple, garments for the priests and their household, as well as for the family of the Inca. Their principal duty was to watch with untiring vigilance over the sacred fire, obtained at the feast of *Raymi*, from the rays of the sun, by means of a concave metallic mirror.

In Rome vestals were likewise bound to keep alive the fire obtained in the same way at the feast of Pales (goddess of the flocks). A similar obligation was imposed upon the priestess of Diana-Laphria at Patras. Any one of those maidens who unfortunately allowed the sacred fire to die out was relentlessly buried alive.

Even in the Roman Catholic Church, once every year, on the day following Good-Friday, the priests make *new fire* by striking together two stones. The officiating father blesses the *new fire* and extinguishes the old; he also burns incense on the freshly kindled coals, and a taper lit from them serves to light all the other candles, that they may burn with the *new fire*.

So among the Mayas, with the new fire the priests burned incense to their gods. Then one by one all

those who were taking part in the ceremony received a small quantity of incense from the priest, who was careful not to spill the least portion of it; they threw it into the brazier little by little, watching it until every particle was burned; the old women meanwhile going through a weird dance to the beating of the sacred *tunkul* (drum) and the music of other instruments, such as the *sistrum*, used in religious ceremonies in many countries.

The priests earnestly besought that the blessing of *Ku* (Divine Essence) might rest upon the people during the year. They then felt at liberty to enjoy the good things that had been brought for them, so a banquet ensued, conducted with the strictest etiquette and good manners; while the people all over the land made merry as they pleased till the sun sank in the west and New-Year's Day was at an end.

BONDAGE IN COMMUNISM.*

LABOR is the unavoidable condition of life ; to toil for existence an unchangeable law of nature. From the smallest microscopic insect to the largest globe that is forever rushing through boundless space, every atom is active ; every creature struggling, toiling, battling for life ; millions upon millions of individuals bound together, forming one great whole, and mutually dependent on each other.

Whether life is worth living or not, makes no difference ; the ever-dominant power that we call instinct, impels us to strive ; repels us from extinction ; we blindly obey. We are weary in mind and body, we suffer only : nevertheless we employ the proper means to go on existing. "Would that I were dead !" exclaims some unhappy wretch ; but propose to send him forth into the great unknown, and see how he shrinks back from the dark abyss when the actual minute of yielding up his existence arrives Happy or miserable, we cling to life.

* Published in " Home Journal."

Suicides do not disprove this, for they take their lives—except in very rare cases—while suffering from temporary insanity.

Work, we must; and we become more and more the slaves of labor as civilization increases and fictitious wants are created.

The unequal distribution of wealth, that causes such bitterness of spirit and fierce struggles between capital and labor, is the natural result of a complicated social system; nor is it easy to suggest an effective, lasting remedy; for we are inclined to think that even the most earnest socialist would be unwilling to renounce his right to amass property. Furthermore, if the goods of the earth were equally divided to-day, within a year matters would be about as they are now; for some would hoard, others squander, and the more venturesome would speculate, thus largely increasing their wealth, or losing it all.

Beyond a question it is piteous to see a thinly clad woman, barefooted, blue with cold, clasping a famished babe to the breast that quivers with suppressed sobs—with grief for the hapless little one who can find there no warmth or nourishment: while a luxurious carriage rolls by, the gouty epicure within too ill-humored to take the trouble of

throwing a penny to his starving fellow-creature, who, with beseeching eyes, implores his aid, as the snow-flakes flutter down upon her ragged garments.

But look! in the snow, at that woman's feet, hopping hither and thither on the whitened ground, some poor little sparrows eagerly seek a crumb. They too are cold and hungry; their tiny limbs are almost stiff. Now, one more lucky than the rest, finds a piece of bread; the others approach, but number one hotly defends his own; will share the morsel only with his mate.

On the other side of the street a fat dog has just found a bone. A wretched half-starved cur ventures near to plead for a share. Does he get it?

Alas! we are but human animals.

Centuries ago, the people of America had a system of communism that we to-day would not tolerate—no! not even those who declaim against capitalists, while in their heart of hearts they hope to one day have a capital of their own.

The Peruvians in South, the Mayas in Central America, were then the two most civilized nations on this continent; both were communists, though the difference between them was great; for while under the rule of the Incas the system was compul-

sory, the Mayas adopted this mode of life from inclination, being as absolutely free from greed of wealth as are their unfortunate and degraded descendants.

The Incas ordained that one-third of the land should be dedicated to the sun; that is to say, to the maintainance of the temples and priesthood. One-third was for all government expenses, public works, etc.; including the support of the royal family, of the army, and to fill the public granaries kept for cases of emergency. The remaining third of the land was divided among the people in equal shares: none could by any means whatsoever augment his property. A topo of land was granted to every male child, half a topo to every female, one topo and a half being considered sufficient for the support of a man and wife. Marriage was obligatory at a certain age; and as a topo or half topo was added to the property at the birth of each child, an increase of family did not make parents dread poverty for their offspring. Once every year additional land was bestowed upon those having a right to it. At the death of any individual, child or adult, the property reverted to the commonwealth. There were no capitalists, no monopolies; consequently no great enterprises except those undertaken by the

government—and they were many—the costs being defrayed by the public treasury. Nor was any one ever distressed by want.

The cultivation of the soil was likewise regulated. Agriculture was held in high esteem by the Peruvians. The Inca himself, at a festival held in the month of November, publicly tilled the ground with a golden plow to set a good example, and the labors of the husbandman were always facilitated in every possible way.

The first land to be tilled and planted was that of the sun, or, in other words, that of the church; all took part in the labor. After that they prepared the soil and sowed the seed on such ground as belonged to the aged, infirm, widows, young orphans and soldiers in service; their wives being considered as needing the same assistance as widows: women did not work in the fields; perhaps for this reason the women's allotment of land was less than that of the man.

No one had a right to attend to his own interests until the land of all the helpless people was sown with seed. The Inca Huayna ordered a man to be hanged because he dared to till the land of one of his relations, who was well and strong, while the work for the infirm was yet unfinished; the gallows was erected on the very spot where the man had been

found working. Charity was not merely regarded as a virtue to be honored but as a paramount duty.

This service having been performed for the helpless, each prepared the land assigned to himself, his wife and children; if a large family made the work too much for one man, it was obligatory for his neighbors to aid him. The lands belonging to the government were attended to last.

Thus we see that beyond a limited extent individual liberty did not exist. Nevertheless, those people were very happy; no wretched beggars dragged their loathsome rags and filth through the streets, disfiguring the highway, filling every sympathetic heart with sorrow.

That system extended throughout a population of millions, every matter being regulated with the greatest nicety. For each ten men there was one who had to look after their conduct and interests; these officers reported to others who overlooked one hundred individuals. They in turn gave a full account of everything to higher officials; and so on up to the Inca, the child of the sun, the father of the people.

The Mayas were no less charitable than the Peruvians. Not content with giving assistance when requested, they searched their towns and villages to

find the maimed and infirm ; providing them with all the necessaries of life. At the time of the Spanish conquest the land was common property; all worked together to cultivate it, dividing the product equally, after presenting a part to their caciques. They never thought of cheating each other.

They had netted purses, and in the markets treated of everything that was in the land. They gave credit, lent and paid without interest. Written bonds were not in use among them, for none dreamed of breaking their word.

Fifty or a hundred would go hunting or fishing ; instead of each appropriating his own game it was equally divided among all at the end of the day. There was such a universal brotherhood among those people that when one went traveling he was welcome in every house, sheltered and fed as a matter of course, nobody thinking of asking or accepting payment. To-day, their descendants, though very poor, are some of the most hospitable people on the face of the earth. Even yet, although entirely in the power of the white man, constantly laboring for exacting masters, they help each other and share equally as far as it lies in their power. If fire destroys an Indian's hut, his home, dear to his heart and as great a loss as a palace can be to a prince, all

his neighbors make time to help him get together the necessary materials to build a new home; gladly sheltering him and his family meanwhile; with never a thought of reward. They love to hunt, and, when they have a chance, go to the woods in large parties for that purpose, always sharing the game equally.

In our civilized communities such an unselfish, disinterested condition of life is quite out of the question. Our race is in a stage of development that makes a similar state of things impossible. *Ego* is now the all-absorbing subject; the foremost in every thought and deed. Until we succeed in moderating our selfishness there will always be millionaires and beggars; with periodical uprisings of the enraged masses, who, in their assault on capital, do about as much harm to the rich man as a butterfly's delicate wings could inflict upon a stone wall: the wings are bruised and weakened; the wall is unaltered. Only when men cease to love money will mankind be well off, and that time is not near at hand.

THE LOST LITERATURE OF THE MAYAS.*

The nations that peopled the American continent prior to the coming of the Spanish conquerors are all spoken of as Indians. The word *Indian* immediately calls up a vision—at least in the mind's eye of many people—of a dark-skinned savage; not overburdened with clothing, but elaborately tatooed and smeared with paint, a towering ornament of gaudy feathers on his head, a tomahawk in his hand.

It seldom occurs to those who have not seriously considered the matter that there is no reason why this large continent should not have been inhabited by as great a variety of people as the lands on the other side of the globe, since it was equally suitable for the human race.

Nevertheless, all scientific discoveries made up to the present time tend to prove that such was in fact the case. The “noble savage” had his place, and there was abundant space left for the sage. They dwelt in different latitudes; those of greater civil-

* Published in “Literary Life.”

ization lived in the tropical climes, so much more conducive to the welfare of man than our temperate zones.

It is in Southern Mexico, Guatemala and Honduras, down to Darien, that the traveler pauses in amazement before splendid monumental remains that are scattered over vast territories. Who were the builders? The people found there at the time of the Conquest said they did not know; if any traditions existed among them they remained untold; nor is it to be wondered at when we consider the way in which the natives were treated by the European invaders.

Civilized as they were in some respects, the Americans at that epoch were degenerated—as history teaches us that all great nations do sooner or later degenerate, like individuals who, having reached maturity, pass to old age and decay. Even the Mayas, once masters of all Central America, the hardest to conquer, and the most civilized, would, after a few more centuries, have relapsed into a savage state, into a national second childhood. The palaces and temples of their ancestors make the peninsula of Yucatan, where there are several ancient cities, a very attractive place for antiquarians;

those temples and palaces are elaborately adorned with sculptured ornaments and inscriptions.

If a complex language indicates an advanced civilization the Mayas were highly civilized, for their language enables one to express the finest shade of thought; even to-day some of the aborigines use such poetical forms of speech that it is a delight to listen to them telling quaint stories. The priests, who accompanied the Spanish conquerors to Yucatan, felt sufficient interest in the new country to write an account of what seemed to them noteworthy, though there is not the least doubt that they left many things unrecorded; they, however, took particular care to describe the books of the Mayas.

Father Landa, in his work "*Las Cosas de Yucatan*" (the things of Yucatan), tells us that the Maya priests wrote books about their various sciences, and imparted their knowledge to others whom they considered worthy of such enlightenment.

Very good paper was manufactured from the roots and bark of certain trees, the surface of the paper being made lustrous with a white transparent varnish on which it was quite easy to write; the varnish was said to be indestructible. The paper was made in very large sheets, some of the books

being ten or twelve *varas* long (a *vara* is 33 inches), of one piece, and folded like a fan.*

Archæology was one of the sciences studied by the Maya wise men, which shows that the past was as great a mystery, and as attractive a subject for them as it is for antiquarians of our days. They also had works on medicine, on astronomy, on chronology, and geology; theology too was treated of in their writings, and they had a ritual explaining when certain religious festivals should be celebrated: the art of divination and gift of prophecy were likewise considered.

Many of the gentlemen were instructed in all those matters, being much respected for their learning, but never spoke about it, or made a display of it in public; they were no doubt bound not to divulge certain things revealed to them in the secrecy of initiation.

There were individuals who made a special study of genealogy; they were frequently employed to trace out the ancestry of persons who wished to boast of noble lineage.

They had books containing the early history of their own nation, and that of other people with

* Cogolludo. "Hist. de Yucatan."

whom they had had friendly intercourse or war. In those volumes there were complete records of what had taken place in different epochs; of the various wars, inundations, epidemics, plagues, famine, and every important event.

Doctor Aguilar, a Spaniard who succeeded in learning to read some of the Maya writings, said that in a book which he took from one of the "idolators," he read of a plague which had fallen upon the country in remote times; it was called *Ocna-kuchil*, which, said he, means *sudden death*. (*Ocna* is to *sink down*, *kuchil* to come to a termination). There was also an account of another plague which made such shocking ravages that the buzzards entered the houses to consume the corpses, the people being no longer able to bury their dead.

The name they gave to inundations and hurricanes was *Uunyecil*, "flooding or floating of trees."

Among the divinities mentioned in their theological treatise was the goddess of painting (probably of literature, because all their writings were painted in various colors) and "weaving figures into cloth" (tapestry). She was named *Ix-che-bel-yax*.

The god of poetry was called *Ah-Kin-Xox*. (The priest who says foolish or frivolous things).

With the exception of singing and poetry the arts and sciences were personified as females.*

The Spanish historians tell us that the Mayas had remarkable memories and were in the habit of reciting ancient fables; the Christian fathers did everything in their power to make them forget such folk-lore. To effect their purpose more rapidly they made free use of the lash and obliged the victims to learn all sorts of stories connected with the Romish church. This, of course, was after the fathers had learned the Maya language; it must be remembered that the conquest of Yucatan occupied several years.

Among those who knew the ancient fables there were some very clever actors who personated the characters portrayed in such stories.

Notwithstanding the fact that many of the books were on scientific subjects, Landa makes the following confession, as if he were rather proud of the deed. "We found a *great number* of their books, but because there was nothing in them that had not some superstition and falsehood of the Devil,

* Cogolludo. "Hist. de Yucatan."

we burned them all, at which the natives were marvellously sorry and much distressed. *

Father Cogolludo, who went to that country a hundred years later, commenting on the destruction of the books, says: "It seems to me that the books might have been sent to Spain."

Besides burning the paper books, Landa fed the flames with twenty-seven large *manuscripts of parchment* (deerskin); likewise destroying five thousand statues, of various sizes, and one hundred and ninety-seven vases.

Words fail to express the regret that one must ever feel at this irreparable loss, due only to the misguided zeal of a fanatical priest whose intellect seems to have been groping in the darkness of the middle ages. Could we but have those books in our hands to-day, in this age of discovery, possibly we should find that some of those very things condemned by the good father as superstition and falsehood, were a record of curious facts or studies known in times gone by, and now re-found. Who can tell? How many of the recent discoveries would have been regarded, less than a hundred years ago, and even by the most extravagant minds, as utter impossibilities?

* Landa. *Las cosas de Yucatan*, chap. xli., p. 316.

Landa had but an imperfect understanding of the Maya writings, and has given no translation of any of them; yet, with some inconsistency, he made a copy of the alphabetical signs, as well as others that stood for the names of days and months. It is well that he did this, for although he boasted of having burned *all* the books, four escaped falling into his hands—how, it is not known; and the few signs he condescended to copy and keep, now serve as a key to the translation of those precious volumes. They are known as Troano Manuscript, Dresden Manuscript, Codex Vaticano, and Codex Lettellier. This last is in the Imperial Library at Paris. We are not aware that any of these manuscripts have been copied, except the Troano.

This one belonged to a gentleman named Tro y Ortelano, Professor of Paleography at the Madrid University; he lent it to the learned archæologist Abbé Brasseur de Bourbourg, permitting him to reproduce it, the French government defraying expenses; one of those facsimile copies is in our possession.

The Troano Manuscript is divided in two parts, one having thirty-six plates, the other thirty-four, each measuring about ten by five inches, and being separated by broad, horizontal lines into two

three, or four compartments, as paragraphs. Some of the pages are illustrated by colored sketches, others are composed entirely of text. The title-page occupies the place of the last page in our books; the seventieth plate being what we call the first page. The text is written sometimes in horizontal lines, sometimes in vertical columns; these columns commencing at the top or bottom, according to the fancy of the writer; the Mayas in this, as in many other things, resembling the Egyptians. The page must be read from right to left; if the sentences are all in vertical columns, the column on the right must be read first.

In the Troano Manuscript the direction of all sentences is indicated by a faint red line beneath, or, if in columns, at their side. These lines seem to have been entirely overlooked by the few scholars who have hitherto attempted the task of translating the book; the result may be better imagined than described.

Dr. Le Plongeon has translated part of the Manuscript. He finds that it is a work on geology and ethnology, containing also an account of some principal events in the early history of the Maya nation. For example, part of the history of the *Can* family, is recorded in the second part, correspond-

ing exactly to what we have discovered, regarding that royal family, in our study of the ancient paintings and inscriptions.

The author of the Troano Manuscript appears to have had a knowledge of the various strata of which the crust of our planet is composed, for he has painted them of different colors. He seems to have also known that the convulsions of these superficial strata, earthquakes, were due to volcanic forces, and to have been acquainted with these forces, since he represented the activity of volcanoes by appropriate signs.

In this book we find records of cataclysms by which the face of the earth has more than once been changed, owing to the submersion of some lands, and the upheaval of others. It confirms the story of the disappearance of a great island, Plato's Atlantis, in the Atlantic ocean. The text consists of very brief sentences that tell the facts in as few words as possible.

How old is the Troano Manuscript? is a question frequently put to us; and one that we cannot answer positively. It is, however, our opinion that the book was written thirteen hundred years ago; although it refers to events which took place in very remote ages.

Like the Egyptians, the Mayas had a demotic (popular) and a sacred alphabet ; many of the signs in each being similar to those of the Egyptians.

In the ancient edifices of the Mayas we find inscriptions in stone, wood, and stucco. Those of stone are in three styles, intaglio, bas-relief, and mezzo-relievo. The wood-carvings are in bas-relief; those of stucco in mezzo-relievo.

The writings of Mexico proper (anciently Yucatan was not part of Mexico) were altogether pictorial. Not so those of the Mayas; but, like the Egyptians, the Maya scholars represented material objects by drawing their outlines to render their conceptions more plain to those uninitiated in the arts of reading and writing.

They also employed symbolic characters, in order to conceal truths discovered by them when they did not care to make them known to the multitude; perhaps believing that "the secrets of nature or art discovered by philosophers, must be hidden from the unworthy."*

Besides pictorial and symbolic characters, they had phonetic or alphabetical signs, letters, which they called *uoo'h*. The Maya hierogrammatists often

* Roger Bacon, de secret. oper. art. et nat., cap. I.

employed in one inscription two modes of writing, even three; the figurative, symbolic, and phonetic; neither of them were like that which among the Egyptian writings is called demotic.

By the figurative method, subjects of a purely physical nature could be presented to the mind more surely than by the most perfect phonetic system. In writing the names of persons by this method the signs used are called *totems*, and are images of the things they take their names from; thus an individual named Fish would be represented as a fish.

By the symbolical method, ideas were indirectly expressed. They consisted for the most part of certain emblems denoting different names given to Deity, the various phenomena of nature, and certain metaphysical conceptions: for example, in the Troano Manuscript the busy bee signifies the activity of volcanic forces.

As among other nations of antiquity, so among the Mayas, the priests and noblemen were the scholars. About the fifth century of the Christian era many of these were put to death; others fled for dear life, to wander in distant lands, because the warlike and blood-thirsty Nahuatlts of Mexico invaded the country and conquered its inhabitants.

We have reason to hope that at that time the

wise men concealed some of their books to save them from destruction. If we ever obtain the necessary protection, we shall endeavor to bring those volumes to light.

It is possible that some old books are yet hidden among the extremely secretive natives ; in fact we have had vague information of such books on two occasions. When we were at Mugeris Island, Don Pedro Pobedano, the oldest inhabitant of that place, told us that when he was a boy he knew a very old man named Jacobo Canul, who lived on the mainland at a place called Gicantun, near the city of Motul ; that he had a large Maya book called by him *sacred writings*. In it there were many prophecies, "some of which have been, others are being, fulfilled," said Don Pedro. He did not know what had become of the old man or his book.

Again when we were at Espita, in the interior of Yucatan, we made the acquaintance of an Indian potter, said to be a hundred and fifty years old, but having all his faculties, and still working for his living ; his name was Mariano Chablé. When we asked him if he knew anything about the ancient ruins in the city of Chichen Itza, he said, "No, but when I was a boy I knew a very old man whose name was Alayon, and he talked to me about the enchanted

houses. He had a book that *only he could read*, which contained many things about them. I do not know what became of the sacred book."

With the dispersion of the Maya priests, the arts and sciences disappeared, or died out; yet there were some men who remembered the primitive history of the nation, who perhaps had in their possession ancient books. The author of the Troano Manuscript seems to have had some such documents.

But the antique or hieratic mode of writing being only understood by those initiated in the art, under oath of secrecy, a new alphabetical system was needed. In the mural inscriptions we find also traces of a writing that might have been known to the people, as was the demotic among the Egyptians. These popular letters no doubt served, together with some of the signs of the Nahuatlts, to form the alphabet that Landa, several centuries later, found in use, and preserved for us at the same time that he destroyed all the Maya literature he could lay hands on. His alphabet contains only six letters of the old hieratic alphabet, which Dr. Le Plongeon has discovered by studying the sculptured mural inscriptions.

The Troano Manuscript is written with the *new* alphabet, and for this reason we judge that the work was compiled after the settlement of the Nahuatlts in the peninsula.

The task of fully translating the volume requires much patient labor; yet would be as nothing compared with the work of interpreting the mural inscriptions found on the walls of the ancient temples and palaces. Nevertheless, this can be done if students turn their attention to it, because the alphabet discovered by us is a key to them, and the language in which the records are inscribed is still spoken—though many words are lost or changed—by the aborigines of Yucatan, who gaze with awe and wonder upon the handiwork of their ancestors.

FABLES TOLD BY THE MAYA INDIANS.

AMONG the great number of languages now spoken by mankind, one of the most mellifluous and expressive is the Maya tongue of Yucatan, Peten, and the frontier of Guatemala. There is a great charm in listening to fables told by the natives of those places as they have learned them from their fathers, one generation after another, for centuries past.

The ancient Maya poets, whose writings were burned by the first Spanish priests that went among them, generally sought in the voices of the animals for something that would enable them to give a pleasant lesson in morality. Thus it is that the songs of the various birds, and even their most mournful cries, are explained in fables. We have already published the story of that gorgeous bird called *Toh*, and how it always cries *toh! toh!* (straight! straight!), because at the time of the deluge (destruction of Atlantis) it was ordered to perch at the cross-roads and direct divers creatures to a place of safety.

The pretty dove called *Cucutcib* seems to be ever

grieving. From the depths of those forests where sunbeams dance among the leaves and struggle with them in a vain endeavor to reach the delicate ferns and flowers that nestle below, her sweet but plaintive cry is wafted to us on the breeze that comes laden with forest echoes. Soft and clear, each syllable strikes our ear—*cuuc-tu-tuzen* ! ending as with a sigh, and the Maya poet tells us why the bird is lamenting.

This violet-plumed dove, emblem of the faithful wife, was, on a lovely morning, carefully guarding the little eggs in the nest. Along came the squirrel, a sagacious and artful creature, and perched on a pliant bough near by the tranquil nest. Making himself as pretty and winning as possible, he addressed himself to the dove.

“My dear friend, why do you thus always remain at home, lonely and unsociable?”

“My husband is out,” said the innocent wife; “when he returns I will go. We must not leave the tiny eggs unprotected.” “Poor little one!” replied the sly animal, “while you are taking care of the nest your husband is amusing himself with other doves. This very day, I have seen him with my own eyes.”

Like a poisoned arrow, jealousy wounded the

heart of the dove and she hastily abandoned the nest.

Immediately the squirrel devoured the small eggs, having won his breakfast by his own cunning, and the credulity of the simple and jealous dove.

When she returned to the nest, alas! she sighed with anguish to find it empty and the frail shells scattered in fragments upon the ground beneath! Since then she only repeats in soft and sorrowful accents, *cuuc-tu-tuzen! cuuc-tu-tuzen*, that is, "The squirrel deceived me, the squirrel deceived me."

The fable concludes by saying that in view of what happened to the dove, the married woman should always be extremely prudent; and that people in general should be on their guard against malignant and cunning mischief-makers, who are ever ready to reach their own ends by cheating unsuspecting people.

A similar fable is that of the owl and the iguana (large lizard), supposed to account for the doleful cry of certain owls that give vent to prolonged O's! at all hours of the night.

In a snug little grotto the mother owl was arranging her feathers and saying to herself. "I shall go when he returns."

Soon her mate was by her side, and she told him

to be very watchful, because she had seen a large iguana close by. "Be sure you do not abandon the nest one minute," she said, as she put the last touch to her feathers and flew away.

Hardly was she out of sight when an acquaintance came to invite Mr. Owl to go a short distance with her to look at her own beautiful offspring that had just opened their lovely eyes.

"Impossible!" he said, "my wife has left me to take care of this nest."

But the other enticed him, saying. "You can return immediately, and she will not know you have been out."

The foolish bird allowed himself to be persuaded, and away he flew to gratify his neighbor's wish and his own curiosity.

Meanwhile, the dreaded iguana had the nest in view, being on the trunk of a tree near by. As soon as the white-breasted owl had gone, he crawled down to the ground and rustled through the dry leaves scattered at the foot of the tree. Stealthily approaching the coveted eggs he carefully took one between his jaws and went behind a big stone to enjoy his ill-gotten meal. Before he had time to go for the other, the truant owl returned, and great was his dismay.

“Is it possible!” he exclaimed, “why! I have only been away a minute. What can I do? Come what may, I shall not say that I have left the nest, and I will try to persuade my wife that there was but one egg when she went from here.”

Very soon he saw her coming and his heart was all in a flutter, but he tried to look unconcerned as if nothing had happened. He stood on one side of the nest and made himself as pretty as he could to attract her attention; but the maternal eye instantly fell on the nest, and a cry of indignation made the owl start. However, with feigned surprise he said: “Why! what’s the matter?”

“Wretch! where is the other egg?” she demanded

“Other egg!” echoed he.

“Yes, other egg! There were two, and well you know it. Monster! you have been away and the iguana has come.”

Pretending to be very innocent, the owl opened his eyes wider and said: “You are certainly mistaken; there was only one egg.”

But his wife knew better, and upbraided him bitterly, in spite of his assertion that he knew nothing about it. Loudly lamenting her loss she searched around the grotto, piteously exclaiming O! O! O!

and soon found fragments of egg-shell which told their own sad story, and destroyed all her doubts and the confidence that she had ever had in her mate, who had lied to try to hide the wrong he had done. Ever since then the owl has remained inconsolable, and in the dead of night we hear her bewailing her loss, always repeating O! O! O! Now this, concludes the poet, should teach us never to be persuaded to do what is contrary to our conscience or good judgment, if we would keep out of trouble.

MAYA ROMANCE.*

IN the famous city of Chichen Itza there is much rejoicing and great preparation, for Chanbel, the valiant and noble young lord, is to be united to the beautiful Lilá (dew-drop).

And she? Alas! the tears fall thick and fast from her dark lashes when her hand-maids are not by; she loves not Chanbel. He is good and devoted, but her heart is given to another whom she has been forbidden to see, even to think of, because when yet a babe she was betrothed to the one who will soon so gladly claim her as his bride! For she is beautiful as the loveliest flower; with eyes bright as the glorious sun they worship; gentle as the placid water of the lakelet; pure as the mountain air;—so says Chanbel, and he is happy.

Lilá wanders amid the flowers on the broad terraces surrounding her childhood's home; her maids marvel at her down-cast looks. Is she ill? Have they displeased her? No, but she wishes to be alone.

*Published in "Home Journal."

PHILOSOPHY OF AN INDIAN SAGE. *

THE day was dying, and the great crimson orb, surrounded by golden and purple clouds, half sunk below the horizon, looked like the domed roof of some vast temple. Each wrapped in his own thoughts, the aged man and I, together admired the exquisite beauty of that sky; but how differently did it impress us! The sage, wrinkled and bent, was reminded by the setting sun that his day too was drawing to a close; something like a sigh escaped him. Was it regret or anticipation of release?

"Father," I said, "such a scene fills my soul with delight, with hope. The beautiful colors and forms make me revel in dreams of brighter lands, of a better state, where there shall be only joy and goodness. Surely in time man will become more perfect even here. There is much to hope for; we must have faith in the future. What sayest thou?"

Raising his head, the old man said, "Hope! faith! enchanting illusions, interminable anticipations

* Published in "Home Journal," and in the "North British Advertiser" of Edinburgh.

never to be fulfilled! Afar off we see a glittering light, soft and clear as that of the fire-flies that illumine the darkness of night. It is distant, very distant; that distance is the future, unknown, mysterious, always before us, never to be overtaken. We see the bright beam, but between it and us all is vague and shadowy. The solitary light is hope, with its glowing radiance, its deceptive mirage; hope that instills into us life and courage to go on—on—into the dim future of many griefs and few joys; that future from which, could they peer into it, many would shrink aghast, and to which others would wish to rush blindly forward to gather the yet unripe fruit that in their ignorance—poor fools!—they think will give them happiness. O, soft ray! O, fair hope! everchanging, never, never true! for delightful as the reality may be, how far does it fall short of the expectation! The nectar we have longed to quaff no sooner reaches our lips than it becomes embittered! Hope is but a vain shadow, and we cling to it as to a strong anchor; like the bright reflection cast by a mirror, its light withdrawn leaves us in yet greater darkness, Daughter, those who have no hope are never disappointed.”

“Ah, let us not lose it!” I interrupted; “better to be disappointed than hopeless; few indeed are

the brave souls that need not hope ; many a weary spirit, without that one poor consolation, would pass through its joyless existence like a wanderer in the desert without sun or star to guide him on."

But the sage said, " Happy is he who after a lapse of years can yet hope ! Happy the one whose heart has not grown sick from hope long deferred ; for hope departed, can faith exist ? Faith is hope's youngest sister. We hope, and have faith that our hopes will be realised. We cease to hope—for what then do we require faith ? Faith for the hour in which we are, is not needed. Faith, embracing hope, is in the future ; both are in fact mere words, void of meaning even for the most hopeful and faithful."

Gazing upon the wrinkled face of my companion my heart was filled with pity for one who had been robbed of all life's sweet illusions, and I said, " At least we have the happiness of doing good to the sorrowing and needy ; we may ever rejoice in the exercise of charity. And yet, can lovely charity exist where hope and faith have fled ?"

" No !" replied the aged man ; " if we hope not for better things, have faith in no one, in nothing—the motive for charity is gone. Why put forth a hand to raise the fallen if we have no hope for them, if we believe they will fall again as surely as the sun will

rise to-morrow? To relieve the temporary wants of a fellow-creature is called charity. The beggar wanders forth from his wretched hovel with hope and faith to win something from charity. He succeeds and shares his morsel with one as miserable as himself. The beggar in that brief hour exercises hope, faith, and charity. Thinkest thou that he would share the food if his heart was not buoyed up with the hope of obtaining more? Assuredly not! Had he not faith in to-morrow, he would not give away the mouthful that might preserve his own life. Let me tell thee, O, deluded young dreamer! that charity is trodden in the dust when the great law of self-preservation thrusts itself forward. Ah no! that beggar would hoard the fragment of food as a miser his treasure. In hopes of obtaining more to-morrow he is charitable to-day. Believe me, daughter, such is life in its stern reality. Poor humanity! with all its pride, its vices, its prated virtues, what is it? Make a hole in the earth, fill it to the brim with flesh—human or not human, all flesh is alike—return to that spot a few days later; gaze upon that same flesh. Ah! thou recoilest! None could recognize mother from brother, father from sister. All identity is gone, and millions of identities will spring from the destruction, identities

that we either ignore or regard as infinitely inferior to ourselves; identities that are, in fact, no less important in the Great Whole than we—we who consider ourselves of such vast interest to the Supreme Power; we, who deem ourselves so wise! though we cannot even in our brief mundane life, learn half the wonders of the world we inhabit—this little ball of matter! Spread some earth over the pitful of flesh so foul to our coarse sight. Soon it will yield most sweet-scented flowers, nevertheless they and their perfume are the product of corruption.”

The old man paused. Stretching my hand toward the darkening heavens, already studded with a few glittering stars, I asked him, “Is there, then, no perfect happiness in any part of that immensity, no divine abode where sorrow is unknown?”

“Happiness and sorrow only exist by comparison. The two conditions are as inseparable as light and shadow. Wert thou to live a million years in every part of the universe, thou couldst never escape all pain. To be, is to suffer as well as to rejoice. Subdue thy emotions in order to be less sensitive to grief, and thy capacity for joy will likewise be decreased. If thou wouldst know the way to avoid suffering as far as it lies in thy power, I admonish thee to commune much with nature, and little with man; and if

thou desirest a cheerful spirit, see that thy body enjoys perfect health. For the rest, let conscience be thy guide—that is, do always what thou believest right.”

“Canst tell me, father, what is truly right, what wrong?”

“The law-givers of each land will assure thee that right is to obey their mandates; and will chastise any divergence from them; while Nature, inexorable, will instantly inflict the penalty of any disobedience to her laws. Vice is to do anything that is unnatural. It is right for the creatures peopling sea and air to prey upon and devour each other; they obey that supreme law, self-preservation. Harsh as it may sound, selfishness is a law that all must obey.

“Those creatures follow that unerring guide called instinct, almost destroyed in man, who is now in a pitiable intermediate condition; having enough intelligence to enable him to make himself miserable by abusing instead of using. Alas! will he ever be intellectual enough to seek happiness through perfect obedience to nature’s laws? The fanatic fasts until he is horrible to look upon, heaping indignities and torments on his unfortunate body. The glutton forces into his poor stomach what would be enough to keep two or three men in good health.

Are not the fanatic and the glutton equally culpable and wretched? Be moderate in all things; crave neither wealth nor honors, for only knowledge and wisdom can give true satisfaction. Ponder my words, daughter, and if thou dost not realize them to-day, thou wilt do so at some future time when we see each other no more."

SUPERSTITIONS CONCERNING ECLIPSES.*

FROM time immemorial, most peculiar ideas have been and are entertained in different parts of the world concerning eclipses and their cause. The Hindoos believe that a black demon seizes the moon with its claws. As long as darkness prevails, the air is filled with lamentations, men, women, and children entering the rivers, where they remain up to their neck in water until the return of light.

The Siamese priests (Talapoins) believe that when the moon is eclipsed a great dragon is devouring it ; in order to oblige him to let go his prey they make all sorts of abominable noises.

The Chinese, like the Laplanders, are convinced that an eclipse is the work of demons ; and make a great hubbub to frighten them away.

The Romans believed the eclipses to be the work of magicians, and that a great noise could prevent them from hurting the moon. Plutarch says that Aglaonice, during an eclipse of the moon which she predicted, persuaded the women of Thessalica that

* Published in "Scientific American."

by her magic songs she had not only the power to darken the moon, but to oblige it to descend upon the earth.

The Greeks, and the inhabitants of Asia Minor, stood in excessive awe of eclipses. According to Herodotus, in the year 610 B. C., while a battle was raging between the Lydians and the Medes, an eclipse of the sun, predicted by Phales of Millet, occurred. It not only put an end to the fight, but the contending parties hastened to make peace, cementing the treaty by the marriage of Aryenis to Astyages.

If we now turn to America, we find that the Peruvians, Mexicans, and others, were terrified by the phenomenon. The Peruvians particularly dreaded the eclipse of the moon; they imagined that Luna was suffering from one of the mysterious diseases to which she was supposed to be subject, and feared that the queen of night might burst open and fall upon them. To avoid such a terrible calamity, and awaken her from her lethargy, they would sound loud instruments, shout at the top of their voices, and beat the dogs to make them howl. This custom of making a racket during an eclipse still obtains all over Peru, even in Lima.

The Mexicans imagined that eclipses occurred

in consequence of a family squabble between the sun and moon, and that the moon was wounded in the fray. The frightened men observed rigorous fasts, the women inflicted corporal punishment on themselves, and young girls drew blood from their arms.

In Yucatan, the descendants of the Mayas are convinced that when Luna is eclipsed she is sick in consequence of being bitten by some large American war-like ants called *Xulabs*, and that they will devour her if she is left without help. To frighten away her enemies they beat drums, blow shell trumpets, shout, beat their dogs, pinch the cats' tails, and fire rockets and guns towards the moon.

EVOCATION OF SPIRITS.*

IN Belen del Gran Pará, among the most ignorant of the natives, there are medicine men and women who frequently make very successful cures by mysterious means, saving patients that have been pronounced incurable by licensed physicians ; such cases become widely known.

These medicine men say they work by order of spirits of the fire and spirits from the bottom of the deep ; those who claim the help of the fire spirits are said to cure best. Each of these peculiar doctors is supposed to be influenced by a tribe of unseen beings subordinate to a superior, who takes charge of the most difficult cases, and whose opinion is highly respected. The invisible healers are said to be ghosts of people who belonged to the most ignorant classes of humanity,—black slaves, white roughs, savage Indians, cruel pirates, etc., each answering to some particular name.

Besides his fixed number of assistant spectres, in

* Published in "Harpers' Bazar."

whom the medicine man has unbounded confidence, others attend when permitted by the chief ghost—that the medicine-man pretends to hear, see, and touch when alone, and without whose permission he dares not hold intercourse with inferior spirits. The men say that they themselves know nothing of disease or medicine, but that after a while they are unable to free themselves from the authority of the invisible beings who impose upon them the mission of always curing, at least with only intervals of a few days; if they do not comply, the master punishes them, even corporally. On the other hand, when they work faithfully and well the master is complaisant, taking particular care to cure those dear to the medicine man. The more moral the doctor, the more certain the cure, they say; those who have acquired bad habits are influenced by evil spirits that, far from benefiting, harm the patient. Upon such, all look with horror and condemn them as wizards.

The police of Pará pursue these medicine men and women relentlessly; while the lower classes of society tacitly protect them, and will never point out the places where they hold their meetings.

The medicine man appoints a certain day for patients who desire to consult him, with their families, and any friend who has obtained permission to be

present; they go at night-fall—one or two at a time, not to attract attention—to some house in an unfrequented spot, not to be surprised by the police or annoyed by outsiders.

About nine o'clock the visitors, never less than fifteen or twenty, must be at the place indicated. They are recommended to be very circumspect, to have much faith in all they see and hear, and to sing with each spirit certain verses that correspond to them. The doors are well closed, and no one can leave till the meeting adjourns, except with the master's permission. Sometimes they are closeted till early dawn.

The medicine man first occupies himself for about an hour in slowly making ten or twelve cigars, very thick, and nine inches long, mixing with the tobacco a small quantity of pulverized incense, and wrapping it in very thin bark. There are two bottles of fire-water on hand for the libations of "the spirits." They also have a small hollow globe made of wood, perforated with many holes; inside there are pebbles to rattle. This primitive kind of sistrum is secured to a handle, and the medicine man uses it to call the master of the spirits; they say that he gave it to them for that purpose, as well as another instrument made of buzzard feathers.

After various preparations the doctor diminishes the light as much as possible without extinguishing it ; and concentrates his thoughts, slowly smoking one of the cigars. From time to time he introduces the lighted end in his mouth, absorbing a quantity of smoke ; he also takes one of the instruments mentioned, and sounds it rapidly close to his ears. With his mouth he fumigates his arms and hands, in the form of a cross, until, compelled by the repetition of these operations, he closes his eyes and seems to be in a somnambulistic state.

Half tottering, he rises and passes his hands several times over his forehead ; then, with uplifted arms, goes to the nearest wall, strikes it hard with the palms of his hands, and recedes a few steps, always unsteady, repeating the operation two or three times. At last, able to stand firm, he turns toward the company, and says, "Good-evening." His movements are free ; his features, language, way of walking, all his actions, polite or rude, take the character of the individual supposed to possess him.

Those present never address the doctor by his name, but that of the one said to control him, who, by his manners and language, is known to some among them. They answer his greeting with courtesy, and try to please him by all means in their power, offer-

ing him rum or some good thing they have prepared for him; beg him to sing: if he does, join in with him, and respond to the toasts he deigns to drink to those present. Afterward, by invitation or voluntarily, he attentively examines the patients, gently touching the affected parts, and asking questions concerning the malady. He fumigates the seat of the disease, makes passes over the individual with one of the small musical instruments, and lastly prescribes. When he has finished attending to patients he takes more fire-water and says good-by. Then goes to the wall as before, strikes it with his open palms, and seems greatly exhausted.

After a few minutes' rest he again approaches the wall, as already described, and soon is said to be under control of some one else, who with very little difference repeats what the first did; one thus succeeds another throughout the night. Some only minister to two or three patients, others to many; the master always attending to the most serious cases. They sometimes approve the prescriptions of those who have preceded them, but may prescribe other remedies; then the master decides which shall be used. The medicaments ordered are herbs, barks, roots, and in a few cases purgatives from the drug-store, to be used exactly as directed. When bleed-

ing—in the arms or feet—is ordered, the doctor undertakes to bleed them at once, or at the next meeting, or in the home of the patient, using for the operation a piece of glass tied to a small stick.

When at work the medicine men and women are naked above the waist. Some make their preparations in complete darkness, requesting those present to light up the room as soon as they are influenced by the first spirit. Others keep the room in obscurity only during the first part of the night. In the dark, after the preparatory ceremonies, a very loud voice seems to proceed from some empty utensil. It salutes those present by roaring out “Good-evening,” takes information about the patients, speaks of incidents connected with their illness, and enters into conversation with those who are present simply from curiosity, answering almost any question they ask, even concerning the future; then, after the people sing with the voice, it gives thanks, and is heard no more. Soon another manifests, and another, until midnight, when the doctor puts a stop to it, to continue with light the other part of the performance above described; then the voices are no longer heard except through the mouth of the medicine man.

The individuals who undertake to make the voices

audible are very few, and as the darkness is complete, one cannot know whence they proceed. It is, however, a fact that those who attend such meetings always distinguish the supposed spirits by some particular way of speaking or some favorite expressions, no two voices being alike; and they address those present by their right name before it is revealed.

It is a remarkable fact that in Yucatan, also, the Indians hide themselves at night, to perform ceremonies similar to those that take place in Brazil. Instead of rum they use a drink called *balché*, which they say is the beverage of the gods. It is made by soaking the bark of a tree called *balché* in honey and water that is allowed to ferment. This same liquor is used in equatorial Africa, and when long kept becomes very intoxicating.

2/14/4
JH
PKH



GETTY RESEARCH INSTITUTE



3 3125 01478 0346

